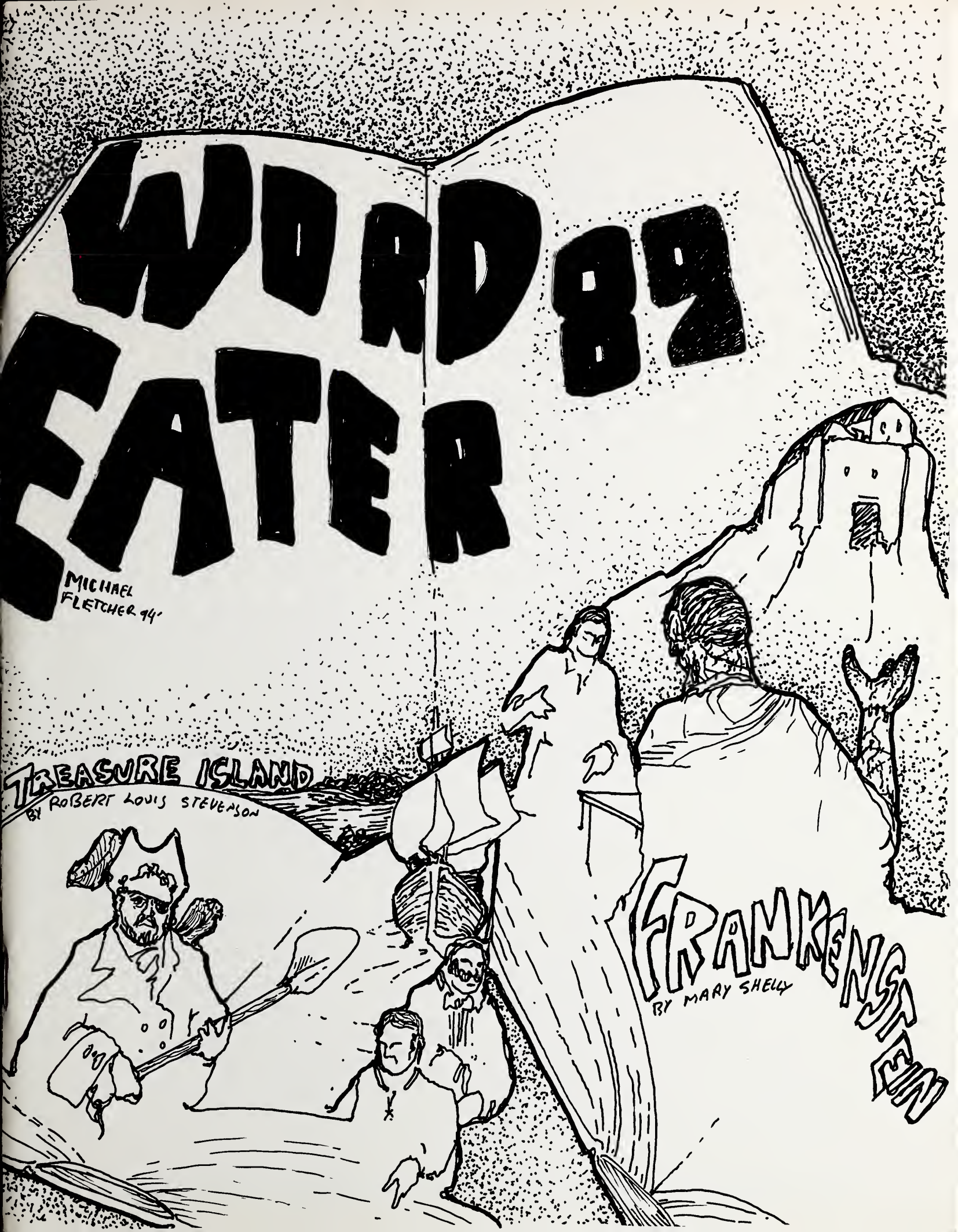
WORD EATER 89
MICHAEL FLETCHER 94'
TREASURE ISLAND
BY ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON
FRANKENSTEIN
BY MARY SHELLY

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Autumn

Mary Honore Coughlen

Life falls to earth in slumber,
leave dormant its upward boughs,
life blood, and summer's heat,
has collected in the ground,
crouched in fibrous root,
held fast below the frost,
succor for the famine,
awaiting spring's warmth.

Frost

Mary Honore Coughlen

Golden daisies dance
cold northern wind, dropping down
gardens sudden death

Ode to My Muse

Michael Fletcher

Imagination is my blood,
Creativity is the fire that boils it,
And my mind sets it free
To sail with the wind.

Whipped by tempest
It whirls like a mad dervish,
Throwing cascades of color,
Which fall like dying leaves.

October Eyes

David Weese

Gently. . .
dawn creeps across his pillow
Usually met with disdain
Today . . . anticipation
They were coming
He would be ready

The usual rounds
. . . forgotten today
He would be there
when they came
Strategically placed on the porch
the old wooden friend
would rock him into remembering

Spinning idly down
the leaves remind him
of their youth . . .
of his season
How they loved to frolic in those leaves
How their merriment would warm his heart

Today . . .He was fourscore and ten
His winter . . .
approaching
Just short miles away
Surely they would come today

The hours . . .
dissolve away
October's long light
. . .now his only companion

Finally a message . . .
more a whimper
is left.

Please . . .
wake me when they come

Now teardrops . . .
and moonbeams
mingle patchwork on the pillow
Silent sorrow
shared only with . . .
the silvery face in the heavens

Wake me when they come
Please . . .
wake me when they come

Comics Were a Dime, Too

Dave Putz

Summer was the sweet time,
In-between and empty of all care.
I guess I don't remember
Any but the bliss.

Bikes sweat-pumping up hill,
Hoping for a breeze or two.
Kool-aid with cracking cubes,
Drowning the throats of the road boys.

Grasshoppers popping,
Jumping on the brownness of the
Meadow filled with baseball;
It goes in the garden, you're out.

We tagged and we swung,
And the woods held our secrets.
There by the dry creek,
Empires rose and fell.

How odd that time has robbed
The pain from all the memories,
And yet I don't feel cheated
By that thief of age.

Law of Demands

Chun-Sum Choi

What is it that I want most?
Let me see.
I'd love baconcheese and eggs on toast.
Nope, too much cholesterol.
I know! I want peace for the world.
OK, so that's too ideal,
I'll take a sugar cone with chocolate swirl.
Mom said that'll ruin my dinner.
I should be driving a Mercedes SL class.
My insurance would be too high.
I know I SHOULD do my best in this class.
Maybe I'll try (.....too lazy.....).
I'd love to go to China and see the Great Wall,
But I don't have the cash.
I want to watch some major league baseball.
Well, you know. They're on strike.
I like some of those brown, salty, crunchy things
On my salad. Bacon bits, YUM.
I will have two EXTRAVAGANT weddings.
One outside and one inside.
Actually, I want them all, and more, and more,
and more . . . . .

I Look...

Chun-Sum Choi

I look in the dark
Blind by the light of music
I saw your heart sing.

Treason

Mike Oliveri

The burly guards dragged Lieutenant Pierce down the dimly-lit, metallic corridor and tossed him into a dirty prison cell. He rolled over in time to see the heavy metal door shut with a harsh whisper.

"Damn," he muttered, rubbing the rapidly spreading bruise on his temple. Those truncheons were a lot heavier than they appeared to be, especially when the guards wielding them had muscles crafted of myomer bundles three times as strong as organic muscles.

Pierce rose to his feet, regained control of his rubbery knees, and examined his new home. The walls were made of the same metal as the corridor outside, and there were no windows. The door was also metallic, and there was a three inch by twelve inch slot at floor level, most likely for pushing food into the cell. A cot was built into the wall to his left, and a commode and sink were in the corner to his right.

He then moved along the walls, running his fingers along the seams and tapping the panels as he moved. He discovered a monitor unit on one wall consisting of a two-way speaker and a small camera.

"Hell if I'm going to let them watch me take a leak," Pierce muttered, patting down his uniform in search of something hard enough to remove the coverplate. However, as his captors had removed his rank pins, belt, boots, and buttons, he was left with an ordinary cloth jump suit and pair of socks. Once again, he cursed under his breath.

Suddenly, he heard footsteps in the hall. They paused periodically, and a brief clatter occurred with each pause. Finally, the footsteps reached his door, accompanied by a low rumbling sound. The panel at the bottom of his door opened, and a tray of gruel and bread was pushed through. A metal spoon floated in the midst of the thick white paste.

"Just what the doctor ordered," Pierce said with a grin. He took up the spoon and moved before the camera. After a few moments of digging and prying, he had removed the coverplate and torn away the speaker and camera unit. Satisfied with his work, he picked up the tray and sat down on the cot. He picked up the bread, found that it was rock-hard, and tossed it aside. He then pushed his spoon through the gruel and lifted it to his mouth. His nose wrinkled in disgust, and he hurled the tray against the far wall. The tray fell to the floor with a clatter while the gruel slowly oozed down after it. Annoyed, he reclined on the cot and laced his hands behind his head.

"Sounds like I've got a next-door neighbor," a muffled voice said through the next wall.

Pierce sat up abruptly. "Apparently. What's your name?" he called back.

"You don't have to shout! These walls aren't as thick as they appear," the voice grumbled. "My name's Jennings. Lieutenant in the New Republican Guard. And you?"

"Pierce. Also a lieutenant. How long have you been here?"

There was a pause. Pierce assumed it to be filled by a shrug. "Two, maybe three days. They take their time for killing you off around here."

"Haven't they interrogated you?"

Jennings laughed. "Sure. Once when I first got here and just a few hours ago. I was just a transport astrogator. They don't tell me anything important. Unless they want to know where we stock our battle station's toiletries!" Jennings broke into raucous laughter.

Pierce couldn't help but laugh with him. "So how'd they catch you, then?"

"Ah, I strayed off course. Smuggling a little 'entertainment' to the battle stations, if you catch my drift."

Pierce smirked. "So we have you to thank for those Centaurian chicks? I'd shake your hand if I could!"

"I'm pleased that you are satisfied with my services. And, although I have no need for money now, I thank you for your patronage."

Pierce thought back. "Yeah, them Centaurian women were something else. If only I had one now."

"Last request, eh?"

"Go out with a smile, I always say."

"Amen to that."There was a brief pause,

then "So where'd they get you?"

"Over Mars. I was with the Fourth Fleet. My fighter engines were disabled, and I was drifting dead. These bastards brought me aboard. I'd rather have drifted into the sun or been hit by a stray comet than be here now."

Jennings whistled. "Fighter jock, eh? I bet they really gave you the third degree."

"Not really. Just asked me a bunch of questions, then knocked me around with a truncheon."

"What'd you tell them?"

"Name, rank, and serial number. Nothing more," Pierce replied sternly. "Treason is unacceptable, even in the face of death."

"I'm glad I'm not a front-liner. I'm not sure I could stand up to their torture. I bet you fighter boys gave 'em a run for their money over Mars, eh?"

"We sure did. Ran off with their tails between their legs," Pierce snickered. "Even saw the reactor on their flagship go nuke and vaporize it and three of their cruisers. What a sight that was."

"Oh, what I would have given to see that. So what's next on the agenda? We chasing 'em home or what?"

"I'm not sure I should say. I don't know who could be listening."

"Ah, don't worry about that," Jennings said reassuringly. "I've destroyed my room monitor, and there's never anyone in the hall."

"Yeah, I've destroyed my room monitor, too. But what about the next cells?" Pierce asked cautiously.

"Hmph. I'm sure they're as eager to hear good news as I am. After all, we're all prisoners here. And Arcturians always kill their prisoners, without exception."

"And you're sure these are the only room monitors?"

"Positive. I've been over my cell hundreds of times and haven't found a thing. They probably don't bother fixing it because we'd just wreck it again."

Pierce sighed. "Good. Anyway, intelligence places their command center for this sector on a temporary station on one of Neptune's moons. In a few weeks, Fourth, Fifth, and Seventh Fleets are moving in. They're going to set up a defensive grid so thick that not one of their ships will make it out alive."

"Seventh Fleet? I thought they were defending our Jupiter supply stations. Wouldn't that leave them undefended?"

"Relatively. It's worth the risk, though, to take out the enemy command structure."

"How many ships?"

"All three flags, a few carriers, about fifteen cruisers. Why do you ask?" Pierce asked, puzzled.

Jennings chuckled. "Oh, no reason. Curiosity mainly."

Suddenly there was the sound of hurried footsteps in the hall. With a start, Pierce realized what he had just done. He leapt to his feet and pounded on the wall. "You son-of-a-bitch! I'll kill you!"

Jennings chuckled. The door whisked open, and two guards moved in and dragged Pierce out into the corridor.

The next cell opened, and a tall figure stepped out. His skin was a pale gray, and his features gaunt. His round, black eyes blinked on either side of his nose as he regarded Pierce with a narrow smile. Pierce recognized him as Kad'drellian, a race of mercenaries, bounty hunters, and similar professions. They had no equivalent word for honor in their native language.

"But. . . the Centaurian women! How'd you know?"

"My last victim served in your fleet. Told me all about it. I just used it as a tool to gain your trust. Pretty neat, huh?"

The guards resumed dragging Pierce down the hall.

"I must say," Jennings called after him. "You didn't take nearly as long as I expected to talk. I wish all your fellow prisoners were just like you. It would make my life much easier."

"I suppose you're going to execute me now?"

"Of course! You've committed the highest crime possible in the New Republican Guard."

"What's that?"

"Why, treason, of course!"

And Pierce knew it to be true.

• •

Sometimes at Night

Nicole L. Bergstom

Again she sees
through vampire eyes.
Embraced my darkness,
Silent Friend.
Moon beam sun
Motions her forward.
Casting aside
Crucifix guile,
Naked lips'
Sweet flesh.
Searching for
crimson love.

Unfulfilled

Mary Honore Coughlen

Moonlight streams in near silent whispers,
falling gently against my bed,
in shadows of deepest night dark,
it quests stealthily to invade,
sleeping with eyes wide open,
lying unto myself,
kept awake by dreams,
of that which has never been.
Open window wide through whom the night
noise creeps,
carrying faint rustlings hidden in darkness,
Sudden silence, then a squeal swirling down
into the deep.
Yet, night cold air across my fevered body,
soothes not my tortured mind,
a fool, a restless dreamer,
voyaging on the twilight tides.
I find no comfort in the night,
nor joy in the day ahead,
imprisoned in my dreams,
of that which has never been.

Ecstatic Soul

Jacob Andrew

Ecstatic soul
banished from Eden
the pleasures of gold
and perils of reason

Stranded at the beginning of time
abandoned on the forceps of war
nothing left to command
or sent to adore

Bathing the path in dry season
fall back on an ancient conclusion
treacherous rational diseased in
an awful delusion

Living in sick constant risk
man always succumbs to nature's wit
the part of forgiveness that is missed
and at the end begins with bliss

Dallas Winks at All the Pretty Girls

Joseph Chellino

There is an onion ring living in my car, running around loose. Hiding in the cushions pretending he's that quarter I lost or a used toothpick.

I've cleaned the entire goshdamned car twice now, and I can't catch him. Sometimes when I'm driving by myself, he'll run up and shake his lousy stinking ass directly in my face and run down my back to a place where I can't reach him. Crumbs all down my spine. Crumbs piling around about a damn foot high.

Sometimes when I talk to other people - to pretty girls - I choke when I clear my throat. I spit out big frigging softball-sized spheres of onion ring batter!

And have I told you about the smell? It wraps around my head like a fog in a goshdamned trash bag.

I'm gonna get a freakin' gun, a rifle that I can keep right next to me in my car, and the next time he comes shaking his lousy ass in my face . . .what the hell time is it anyhow?

Namesake

Zachary Donaldson

Marty O'Ryan was seventeen and lost.

At the moment, he was lost in music. "Fade to Black" muttered from the rear of the car, and he muttered along with James Hetfield's somber words. He intermittently played his fingers across the steering wheel, smiling at the familiar feel of the cracked vinyl beneath his hands.

Marty had left today, his parents' screaming voices crackling in his brain. He had been playing with the engine of the car when their voices slithered across the windowsill and branded themselves in his mind. His mother's high-pitched caw, his father's almost falsetto rejoinders. His mother wanted Marty to join the Army, his father disputing only the chosen branch of the armed services. He preferred the Navy.

Taking nothing, Marty left; he was spending the money that he had squirreled away in his glove box.

The first day had been a trial because he had nowhere to go. No plans, no dreams. He was meaningless. He had no discernible talents, no passions. He only wanted what came to mind. His needs were superficial, and he had to know his purpose. He had driven aimlessly, making only perfunctory stops for gas and food. He had slept in his car at a rest stop in Wisconsin.

Awakening before dawn on the second day of his self-imposed exile, Marty smoked a cigarette and looked up at the stars. His father, in one of his nicer moments, had taught him how to identify the constellations. Bog and Little Dippers; Perseus; his sign, Aquarius; Pegasus. Since he was young, he had found solace in the play of light across the unlit sky. And on that second day, he found both solace and a glimmer of hope in the reaches of the vast sleeve of black above.

Petting his unruly mop of hair, he saw three stars in a line, then the soft curve of another five hanging down underneath, forming a belt and scabbard. Legs, arms, torso, head, all defined by burning gaseous spheres churning light across time to form a constellation that had peered down for eons.

Though he sometimes felt puny in the gaze of these immortal beings he realized that this particular being was part of him.

Orion.

That day, he drove west until the sun crouched below the horizon, biding its time for another hour before making its appointed rounds and allowing people to roam. Only a few ever saw this part of the night, and the few who did usually found no peace; those who sleep during the day and come out at night are considered to be deviant. Marty wished he could tell people what they were missing. He loved the night because it was peaceful. No birds, no staring sun, no people. Marty had discovered a year or so back that people were loud, dirty, and obnoxious. Only the night could bring on a renewal that could only come from a dousing of the lights.

He stopped for the night in southern Wyoming, finding the sparse country soothing, a balm for his aching self. He drifted off in the roomy back seat, watching Orion slowly wheel southwest. He cradled his head on his arms and let the stars easily caress his face.

The third day took him farther southwest, buzzing through northwest Arizona and, at nightfall, the Mojave Desert. Before midnight, he parked the car on the shoulder and lay on top of the car. Orion danced in front of his eyes, weaving through the other stars as though on the battlefield. Marty smiled as he imagined himself next to Orion as he fought the other stars, smashing Taurus, spearing Scorpio, mounting Pegasus, and beheading Perseus. He followed Orion as he charged across the heavens, wielding spear and shield and sword, with Marty hanging on to the back of his tunic, hanging on for all the other jealous stars to see, clinging to Orion, the greatest warrior in the sky.

Marty crossed the Mexican border on the fourth day and made his way down the Baja peninsula that night. He was almost there. He stopped just outside of the town of Piedro and stepped out of his car. From where he was, Orion, the mighty hunter, lover of Artemis, son of Poseidon, enemy of Apollo, would pass directly

overhead.

He climbed onto the roof of the car and lit a cigarette. Lying flat, he gazed serenely upwards. Orion was nearly at his apex. He banished all thoughts of his venomous parents, his disastrous education, his previously mundane life. He threw away his cigarette and focused his thoughts on the hunter above. The wind feathered through his hair and brushed his ruined clothes. Minute pricks of light bathed the rugged terrain, making the flora and fauna - animal, vegetable, mineral - visible and alive. The cacti, the scrub brush, the rock formations, the rattlesnakes and coyote, all separate and individual, all alive and perfect without the scourge of people marring the landscape. Marty drank in his surroundings, both the sky and the land below, and let go.

In an observatory near Salt Lake City, a sleepy astronomer bolted upright and stared at the monitor in front if him.Rubbing sleep from his eyes, he punched a few commands into the keyboard in front of him.

In disbelief he reached for a phone and roused the director of the observatory. The now-awakened man hung up the phone and typed in a new set of commands. After a millisecond delay, information scrolled down the screen in front of him. Still dumbfounded, he looked away from the computer monitor and back at the telescope monitor. He then smiled for he realized that he was to receive the highest honor that could be bestowed upon an astronomer.

Because, in addition to the red star Betergeuse, Bellatrix, the blue-white glow of Rigel, and all the other stars that form the constellation of Orion, there was something else.

The computer logged this as Provo 127-140. What it looked like to human eyes was thirteen new stars near the "back" of Orion. What that meant to the sleepy astronomer near Salt Lake City was that Orion now had a partner in his roam of the sky.

• •

Leaving at Fifteen

Connie Ellerman

The depth of the distance was beyond my comprehension. This distance hopped into view as fleeting as a backward glance. My son's reflection was physically right but the aura about him was not. Who was this shadow of someone I call my own?

The stillness of his voice, the absence of luster in his eyes, the half-bent stance of one so tall - where is it all? What has devoured his happiness and placed him in this cloud? Why can't I contact him, reach out to him like I used to?

Billy - the babe with blue eyes - I'm here. Can't you see me? Can't you hear me? What turmoil blinds you, deafens you so? I worry for you! Fall down, confess, or bare your soul - you must do something - tell me where you go! I miss you, my first born babe. Return to me, please - before it's too late.

• •

Finally Freeing

Chun-Sum Choi

Loneliness
slowly swallowing this heart
in darkness, while Silence sings.
Regrets
seductively suffocating this soul
in solitude, while Desire dances.
Understanding
frantically formulating this dream
in confusion, while Logic calculates.
Passion
finally freeing this man
in euphoria, while Gaiety celebrates.

The Swing

Mary Honore Coughlen

Creaking in the wind,
He hangs like a wretched reminder of the past,
with chipped peeling paint,
rusted chains crack and grumble,
twisting in the wind's argument.

Underneath new fallen leaves have collected,
bitter testament to His abandoned state,
in the distance He can hear the children at play,
modern toys at hand,
bbbbbbrap, bbbbbbrap, bbbbbbrap.

Too enveloped in His lonely state to notice,
until a young child comes upon Him,
grasping Him in hand,
she pulls herself up until she sits upon His seat.

Looking up she can see the branches of the massive tree,
watching the squirrels scitter around their home,
jumping from branch to branch,
up and down the trunk in play.
Finally the swirling wind, with something to do,
blows tender red gold wisps of hair to play across her face,
laughing she lays down in His protective embrace,
And in the gentle rhythm she is quietly rocked to sleep.

For the moment He swings on remembering better days,
days of sunshine and days of rain,
but always the laughter of children,
and in the quiet solitude He is satisfied.

Planets

Dojna Corzine

a level is something we have yet to share
while i feel closed in the core of your stare
the dust fills my eyes till their brillance is rare
only for flaming whenever you're there

World

Rapsin

Silent Night
Silent Light
Sweet Kiss
Secretly Shared
Miles Apart

The Cat's Eye Marble

Heather Hill

The cat's eye marble was what reminded me. I had been cleaning out my desk, the one my senile grandmother had given me, when it fell to the dusty carpet. I picked it up and blew it off, frowning to myself and trying to remember why it was of importance to me. From my window, out of the corner of my eye, I saw the sun struggle between two clouds and finally break loose. Its rays hit the center of the marble and by squinting very hard and thinking very long about it, the cat's eye's past came back to me.

We had been playing hide and seek in the basement. Of course, all the lights were left off in order to give us that scary idea that there were unknown creatures all around us. We were okay as long as we kept the thought of "what we can't see won't hurt us" in the back of our heads. I was "it" and along with the fact that I was terribly scared about being "it," I was also very excited because this meant that I could search for my favorite person.

I stood at the top of the tiled stairway, covering my eyes with my hands and slowly counting out loud to one hundred. I could feel the faint scratchiness of my white lace sleeves as they brushed against my cheeks. As the numbers I recited began to grow higher, the less whisperings and giggles I heard. When I reached the final number, there was complete silence.

I hitched up the bulk of my long skirt and reached down to quietly slip off my shoes. Otherwise they would have made a "clack, clack, clack" noise and given me away. In my bare, pink feet, I left the soft light at the top of the stairs and began my descent.

Entering the dark, I slowly made my way around the large basement. My small hands were stretched out in front of me so that I could feel my way towards the others. Suddenly, I tripped on a hard object that somehow got underneath my feet. As I fell to the ground, I heard a gentle gasp from behind me. Looking towards a long curtain, I could barely make out the shape of a pair of Nikes. I made my way over and yanked back the fabric to reveal . . .the one person who could make my whole face flush bright red just by looking at me. I lowered my eyes, not wanting him to know what I was thinking. Moments passes without either of us saying a word. I used all my strength to raise my eyes back up to his and found that he was looking down at me. He took my hand in his and pressed something cold into my palm. He held my eye for a moment and then walked up the stairs into the light, leaving me alone to find the others.

Before I had gone on to find the others, I rolled the object around in my hands a few times, not knowing exactly what it was, and then slipped it into my pocket to study later. After the game had ended, I tried to find him to ask him about himself, but he was nowhere to be found.

* * *

Now, five years later, as I held his marble up to the fading rays, I felt a sense of loss. I wondered, as I had many times before, why I had not tried to get in touch with the boy who had handed me his favorite possession so many years ago. Always when I think back to those days, I wonder at my own stupidity. My first days in my new neighborhood were both scary and exciting. Being only thirteen years old, it was an awkward time to start a new life. The girls across the street came over, introduced themselves, and took me to the club that was run by the town. The first person I noticed there was a boy a few years older than me who was staring at us as we walked up to the front door of the clubhouse. After we walked inside, I leaned over and whispered to my new friend, Jamie, "Who was that?"

"Oh, you mean Howard? He's just some weird kid. My dad says that there's something wrong with him. He doesn't talk."

Nevertheless, I found Howard very interesting. There was some intangible quality about him that I couldn't quite put my finger on. As Jamie and her sisters began introducing me to people, I hardly listened. I was thinking about Howard.

A few days later, Jamie ran up to me with a horrified look on her face. "You'll never believe it. Guess what? Howard told someone he likes you. He *talked* to someone. I can't believe this. I

feel so bad for you . . .I can't believe this!"

"What's so bad about it?" I said. "What's wrong with him?"

"It's *Howard* ! Don't tell me that you're actually thinking of going out with him. He's a freak! He'll probably try something weird. I've already told him that you're not interested."

And that was that. My decision was already made for me. Even though I was truly interested in him and what he thought, I never had the chance to let him know because I was too worried about what my new friends would think. A few weeks after that day is when the hide and seek incident occurred. I watched him every day and noticed how he never uttered a word to anyone. It worried and yet intrigued me at the same time.

* * *

Years later, things were pretty much the same. Howard had not started talking, and I had not ever let him know that I wanted to listen. Soon my father decided that we should move away again, just when I was getting used to my life. When he told me, I just sighed as if used to this sort of thing and went to inform my friends. Howard had not been around lately and , although he was always somewhere in the back of my mind, I did not say good-bye to him before I left.

I didn't stay in touch with anyone from that town; I hardly kept in touch with anyone after I moved away. I had not even thought much of my life back then until my memories all came back to me. All because of a marble. I sat back and wondered why I had kept it all this time. I thought about it for a while and didn't come up with anything except that Howard used to be constantly on my mind for reasons I didn't understand. It was then that I decided to break my tradition and travel back to that little town to see if I could get in touch with him. The more I thought about it, the more I realized that he must have meant a lot to me - more than I knew - or why would I still think of him the way I did? I decided to first call his house to make sure that he lived there.

The number had been disconnected. After I hung up, I remembered that his family had not had much money - probably not enough to maintain a phone bill. I decided to just drive to the club. It was an hour away, but I wanted to leave right away before I lost my nerve. I pulled out of my driveway and began my trip.

I knew the ride was a simple one. I remembered driving at night and the hospital lights that flashed blue, yellow, and white. But that was years ago. It wasn't nighttime now. I kept my eyes on the road and did not look toward the grounds where the hospital used to be. I thought about Howard and decided to apologize to him when I saw him. I was beginning to feel horrible about the way the kids had treated him.

As I turned and headed northeast at the intersection, I remembered that when I came to the end of this road, I would be there. So I let my mind wander back to the past.

Mid-September, half a decade ago, I walked into that room and saw the only person who could stick in my mind for so long. His hair blinded me. His eyes burned through me. His smile relieved me. That's why I had always looked at his features in that order. I would always walk up behind him because no one in that whole place had hair that brilliant shade of red. As he turned, I would catch his glance and then want to laugh and cry at the same time because I was so curious to know what he was thinking behind that unreadable look.

Although nothing was ever said between us, I felt a sense of communion there. A shared smile and he would turn back around, waiting for the next opportunity to start our little ritual once again. It had been so long! I couldn't imagine why I had gone so long without visiting before.

Snapped back into reality, I realized that I could see the light from the unfamiliar building above the rest of the small city. I sharply pulled to the left and began to make my descent down the twisted, chunky road that spread out before me.

• •

Migraine

Mary Frances Lund

Like a jackhammer
it drags me from sleepy depths,
threatening to steal my sensibilities
and ravage my sanity.

Paroxysms of pounding
beat at my temple -
explosions of technicolor swirls
dance before my eyes -
a single beam of morning light
blinds me with its brilliance
as the rise and fall of internal waves
leaves me prostrate.

Narcotic's sweet relief
gently carries me
to the other side of heaven

while torturous demons
lurk
in cephalic hell.

Lonesome Confused Temptation

Kurt Scantling

Love is a ritual
Lust a tradition
What does it all mean?
Me it perplexes.
Faith, Devotion, Trust, Relationship?
Do I open this "Pandora's box" of lies?
To turn the key, open the lid
  Is it worth the pain Again?
alone Safe in desolation
  Is it worth the ever want and wonder?
Do I feel the cold decay of death,
  or the agony of rebirth?
Either it seems is a choice forever.
  Sandman's chains and demons of torment
They dangle the waking light
                seemingly always
  just beyond my grasp.

Dreaming

Mary Honore Coughlen

I felt the pain
and could do nothing,
I swung suspended,
a pit of boiling heat,
sent steaming vapors,
scalded flesh,
screaming in agony,
I twist in tumult,
awake to damp sheets

Long Lonely Night

Chun-Sum Choi

One long lonely night
lingering in the corner of my mind
past - present - future

Two long lonely nights
loitering in the corner of my heart
remembering - experiencing - planning.

Three long lonely nights
longing in the corner of my life
you - me - us.

More long lonely nights
living in the corner of my soul
laughters - tears - silences.

Adrift in Pity

Tracy Santoro

Swirls of feelings
Seas of emotions
In a ship without navigation

sinking.....

Buoys of security constantly bobbing out of my reach. Island of happiness is passed, disembarkment from this vessel is impossible. My wistful gaze follows it to its own miniscule existence until it's a speck engulfed by the heightening crests. This ship will never be docked.

SO, I PULL THE PLUG AND DRAIN THE SEA.

Darkness

Mary Honore Coughlen

I turn and see the shadows,
shifting in the corner,
a chill whips up my spine.

At night when lights have fallen,
and I traverse my house unknown,
death's damp hand clamps hard.

In darkness evil lurks,
to erupt in fevered moments,
we sit and await its arrival

Heaven and Hell

Michael Fletcher

Baptism by fire would suffice
to raise my soul to paradise.
But in the burning darkness below
a craving hunger wants my soul.

Winning is Everything

Dojna Corzine

this travels the length of my spine like a dream in
heightened horizons YOU'RE NOT WHAT YOU SEEM
giving up vivid shots in your head
picturing heaven i left you for dead

Drops

Angela Brooks

Sorrow, happiness, and pain
pinprick, icy, goose bumpy
Sensation, I'm falling again.
Tears, laughter, and disdain
breaking glass and time
that passed, incoherent mutterings still in vain.
Through it all a picture of you
And desperate hope of change.

The Common Man

Nicole L. Bergstrom

The backbone of society,
Beer-guzzlin', ass-grabbin' ...
Working man.
Swearin', baseball hat-wearin'...
American tax payer.
Chewin', spittin', penny-pinchin'...
Saves for the future.
...a repeat cheat, spiteful, fightin'...
Sports enthusiast.
An ogling, annoying, farting, belching, underwear-soiling,
Overglamorized
ASSHOLE.
Common man.

Waking Dreams

Rapsin

I wish someone would talk to me
Tell me her deepest secrets
How she's looking for someone
To hold securely in her arms
Having that person run smooth hands
Through her silky soft hair
Running warm, seeking palms
Over the hot flesh of her body
I wish someone would talk to me
And tell me I am that one

Vampire

Mary Honore Coughlen

His blood is pounding,
deep wide rhythms,
echo out, I hear him,
I can not see him,
Found, he struggles,
I laugh, teeth plunge,
blood courses down thick,
sustaining me, his shriveled body falls,
becoming one with the forest floor,
discarded, unwanted its purpose gone.

Liar

Heather Hill

i try
but words cannot describe
the pain, full and flowing
trickling through every nerve, every pulse point
in my body
wandering, slashing and knifing through me.

i cry but tears cannot heal me
they only reveal me -- the real me
so numb and dulled by the demons that run
through my mind.

And so i lie...
relentlessly revealing nothing,
timidly tossing thoughts out
to those who will listen.

The Seven-Step Shadow

Connie Ellerman

At first glance, the day bursts into view like any other. A stimulating coolness is in the October air. There is a false sense of calmness in the atmosphere of the morning-after ritual. Three of the four ritual members are stirring with life in the chill of the morning. First I, then my two sons - Billy, an imaginative ten year old and Adam, an equally imaginative three year old. Their father sleeps late as is his custom. It is one of his privileges for working the afternoon shift at a factory. Adam is now fumbling with the remote control, searching for Saturday morning cartoons. Billy retrieves the control from Adam and opens fire on the TV, searching for the latest in entertainment.

I, being a dutiful Mom, rustle in the kitchen trying to second guess what each boy will ask for breakfast - only to have him change his mind when the other voices another choice. The same squabbling over the same subjects as they eat. A framed picture of a close-knit family. This is the scene that startles me into reviewing the sequence of the night before. I'm frozen in my stance as a wave of heaviness taxes my heart. My mind is flooded with flashbacks, signaling my body to life, to feel the pain of the night before.

Now I begin my ritual of the morning-after. I enter the bathroom and close my eyes just before my reflection hits the mirror - the all-revealing mirror that becomes a crystal ball in reverse. It always reinforces and proves his ritual's existence. My heart hammers between anxiousness and dread. Would the traces of his domestic ritual be extreme enough for me to hide from the public eye and my co-workers again? What original dilemma will I dream up this time to warrant another absence? Or will I need to? Perhaps the severity of the pain is deceiving me, and the cause is not visible to the unknowing eye. I tremble with forced courage and open my eyelids. The sight of ME cannot be me. His ritual was performed with greater accuracy than the one before. I stare with unfamiliarity in the mirror. Who is that in MY mirror? This decision is going to be a difficult one. I start assessing the damage to myself as if I am an auto repair man. My hair is gnarled enough to be a homey nest for some small rodent. The master of ceremonies' constant yanking does it every time. Further assessment finds one eyelid swollen into partnership with one eyebrow. My nose moves only a slight degree - to which direction I am not certain. My vision is out of focus. My left cheek angles upward as if to link with my left earlobe. I become aware of a lightning bolt of pain in each breath. The pain is a familiar one, no doubt a cracked rib. I despise this pain the most. I challenge myself to take fewer breaths in hope of some relief.

Now the task of unclothing my body to shower and wash away as many traces as I can of the night before. I start at the torso and work down. My investigation is interrupted by an expected knock at the bathroom door. My two boys, unwilling witnesses to the ritual, need consolation and solid proof that Mom can carry on being Mom that day. They dread the trips to the medical clinics, the embarrassment of telling absolute fairy-tales to explain ritual results to outsiders. It is becoming a challenging game for me to convince the medical profession I fell - again. Clumsy me. I shower my sons with the good news - we can bypass the humiliating trip to the emergency room. Mom can patch this one up herself. They give their most delicate hugs so as not to inflict more pain. I smile one of my strong smiles and whisk them back to the TV.

The next item on my agenda is my least favorite. Domestic rituals make showering an unpleasant chore. The force of the water spray eggs the lumps on my head to cry out in rebellion. It seems Niagara Falls is flowing with its most powerful current through my meager showerhead. I cringe at the thought of adding shampoo to the current; it has a white-water rapids effect. Soaping the damages is done as gingerly as humanly possible. Exiting the shower is a welcome relief.

Now the final assessment stage - I enter my bedroom and look in my full-length mirror. The force of the ritual on the stairway scene has left seven perfectly spaced, six-inch colored shadows down my left side. They seem decorative and deliberate. That is the least of my worries - cloth-

ing will rob the shadows of any hope of revealment. I can't bypass the makeup stage, though. Today calls for the heavy-duty kind. Mission accomplished, I breathe a sigh of relief.

As I hear the master of ceremonies stirring in his bed, my sigh heightens to a gasp. My heart begins refueling with heaviness and despair. That eternal question again haunts me - he won't hold a morning-after ritual, will he? Has the ceremony been upgraded? The stirring noise becomes more evident. I am anchored in front of my mirror. I hear the TV volume lower. Three out of four ritual members now listen and await the verdict. I watch him in the mirror as he rises and sits upright on the edge of the bed. His head turns, and he focuses his eyes on me. I look for a clue, a warning signal. There is none to be seen. His mouth opens to announce his verdict.

"Hi, Babe," he says. "You look nice today."

I free myself from my anchored position. For a brief moment there is relief which I enhance by taking no breaths. Breathing commences, and pain obediently follows. A new day is underway; we've survived another day.

• •

Burn You

Angela Brooks

Burn you
like the incense
that fills the air with
perfumed breath
I'm chasing away the trails of
smoke to purge you from my senses.

There's No Poem In This

Nicole L. Bergstrom

Something joyous,
Something sad.
Something to make
Your mama cry.

Something being
Taken in,
And a tick-tock sound
In the back of her mind.

A darkened room,
A drunken pair.
A bed
Just made for two.

Bliss and torment
In darkness linked,
and a tick-tock sound
In the back of her mind.

Her head against his weary arms,
the ticking of his watch,
The scent of his flesh
Unwashed from her hands,
And a tick-tock sound
In the back of her mind.

Something bitter,
Something sweet.
Something to make
Her mama cry.

The light of the day
Darkened her soul.
And a tick-tock sound
In the back of her mind.

Bound by fate.
Severed by time.
Excuses...
Lies...
...And a tick-tock sound
In the back of her mind,
And a tick-tock sound
In the back of her mind.

O Beautiful

Dave Putz

The mountains' purple majesty
As they sit in the sunlight,
Reflected in their lakes,
Collected by our cameras.

Brooding, powerful, godlike all,
We give them names and stories,
Up close, just rocks and ice.
Only distance clarifies.

But then what names do they give us?
Those scarps and peaks and glaciers.
What lens do they see with
To catch us, quick and dying.

A million years, a number far
Too large, our minds will molder.
But to the hills a blink;
Do they laugh, those long-livers?

Untarnished Hopes

Michael Fletcher

Wild thoughts set forth to ride,
On tempest wind that ebb and tide.
They burn with fire deep within,
Know not the weight of burdened sin.

Swift they fly glory reaped
Past the point of stumbled leap.
Towards the blinding, burning light
Achieving raptuous gloried flight.

Twisting turning upward churning,
It leaves aside archaic learning.
Reason screams, splinters time
Bringing with a bitter rhyme.

Ripping past it darkens bright,
Streaking forward on ebon night.
Daggers flashing tearing dreams,
Pulling at its fabric seams.

Falling past
it never lasts.

Down to darken abysmal folds,
going fast too late to hold.

Yet as it streaks back towards the pit
A little flame again is lit.

Drops of Rain

Chun-Sum Choi

drops of
Rain
dripdown from the clouds
dance on the pavement, Dit - Dat - Dit - Dat
suddenly in a splitsecond lightning smoothlyslithers across the sky
B O O M ! !
Dit - Dat - Dit - Dat - dit - dit - dat - dat
drops
of Rain.....

Manifesto

Ted Thompson

I am against blondes of undulate honeyed skin
(As often as possible)

I am against redheads of icy milk complexion
(As often as possible)

I am against brunettes of cinnamon tone and taste
(As often as possible)

Lest there be confusion
Remember the possible
May prove to be
Never

Manifesto: Against Poems

Bill Yarrow

I am against poems.

I am against poems of declarative intention.
I am against poems of negligible audacity.
I am against poems of intermittent contrition.
I am against poems of insistent irrelevance.
I am against poems of reckless incontinence.

I am against poems of decisive incoherence.
I am against poems of passionate opacity.
I am against poems of willful erudition.
I am against poems of urgent innovation.
I am against poems of conspicuous conscience.

I am against poems of choking observation.
I am against poems of bodily climax.
I am against writs of verse divorce.
I am against poems of limitless prison.
I am against exuberantly recidivist poems.

I am against poems of seditious competence.
I am against poems of staccato meaning.
I am against poems of typographical excess.
I am against poems of circumambient pity.
I am against servile virtuous poems.

I am against poems whose ambition is located in the poet and not in the poem.
I am against poems which hold the truth to be self-evidence.
I am against poems which name-drop out of an inability to describe.
I am against poems which are pathologically adjectival.
I am against poems that deliberately and shamelessly sound like poems.

I like this poem.

Foreplay

John Stobart

I love poems, stories, and other works
That sing and skip and stumble at play
Provoking anger, lust, hunger, serenity,
Humor, history, myth, nostalgia, fear,
Admiration, and loathing.

I appreciate being mousetrapped by illusions
Or puzzled by a parade of images and
Symbols echoing the grace or panache
Of generations of ancestors saturated with wit
Or charm, perhaps even certifiable insanity,
Whimsically elegant, crudely clever,
Syncopated or clueless,
Reverent or politic,
Obscure or blessedly obscene.

Poems are Fun

Dave Putz

Life is...Oh, wait! The book says that's too vast,
I better start again with smaller cast.
As youthful spring begets the summer's crest...
What? Hackneyed phrase? I see. I'd best
Begin anew and clear my mind this time.

As dew-kissed rose of morn,
Shouts silent songs, softly sworn...
O'er alliterated, awfully hard to speak,
I think my metaphors are weak,
And badly mixed from forcing them to rhyme.

One more try, I've got to get this right,
It's due on Tuesday and it's Monday night!
Blank verse, blank screen, it's hard to comprehend,
Words used each day end up as rhymes that rend.
Iambic whatmeter guaranteed to vex.

Minot would gasp at most of what I have,
One missing foot (I think it's in the grave),
And rhyme schemes hide whatever theme I meant.
All that I write is verse that's strained and bent,
Oh damn! This Creation is complex.

The One

Jacob Andrew

the dawn. the essence of her body. of her being.
a hidden, delicate reason
to pray to stay
life and grace wound in a kiss
i've found the distance, relentless pursuit
summoned. at last, i need.

Six Ways of Seeing Music

Mary Frances Lund

I
Sepia ripples
melody past my ear
like butterfly kisses on skin

II
fingertips poise to dance
up ivory, down ebony,
ballerinas twirling
harmonically

III
adagio swans
glide majestically
in halcyon unison
over watered silk

IV
pastoral dreams
haunt and drift
through fragrant fields of clover

V
crimson flamencos
with gypsy castanets
cascade in arpeggios
clicking

VI
faster and faster
shards of furious eighth-notes
crash and break in exuberant waves

(inspired by Wallace Stevens' Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird)

Proliferation

Jeremy Pautz

It was hard to tell where the person ended and the room began. A vague human form hung in the center of the room, a dead-tired scarecrow. The bodylike shape and the rest of the room were decorated in overlapping layers of dark metallic plates, diffuse and exoskeletal, like an insect's skin. A little light was sneaking in from somewhere.

"What's this place?" Jonah muttered.

Harker lifted a black plate on the wall, revealing more ugly black metal. "You saw the number on the door. Apartment 301," he answered and went over to the hanging shape. Its arms limply embraced the universe; its neck was floppy and downcast. The legs were just sort of there. Harker lifted up the head by a black metallic skull plate.

Jonah cursed. "What're you doin'?" he said, shocked.

Harker ignored him. "It is a person. I guessed right." Harker peered deep into the person's eyes. The pupils were dark saltgrains amidst brilliant green irises; lips were parted slightly, slack like the rest of the face.

"It's dead," Jonah muttered, disgusted but quiet. Both he and Harker were whispering; Apartment 301 was a holy place or might as well have been.

"Shh. We don't want to offend," droll Harker said and put his hand near the hanging person's almost colorless lips. Faint heat issued rhythmically. He corrected Jonah's assumption. "Alive, Jonah. Lively as a brick, but quite alive."

Jonah bent down and touched the floor. "The floor's slippery." His finger dragged across the cold, dark floor and returned, wearing a layer of translucent gel.

Harker felt the dim falling on his shoulders as he twisted the person's head slowly from side to side. "You bring that flashlight?" he said to Jonah, mesmerized by the seam between metal and skin on the hanger's head. Other than the color change, there was no difference. Even the texture of the metal changed only gradually; near the seam the metal was warm and soft.

"Yeah," Jonah said, wiping his hand on his pant leg. He fished through his jacket, got out the flashlight, and gave it to Harker. Harker turned it on and flashed at the hanger's face, then away.

"No response to light. Of course the pupils are nearly shut so that doesn't mean much," he said.

Jonah got near the light and looked intently at the frighteningly green eyes. "She's on something. He's on something. It's on something, whatever it is. What makes your pupils that small? It's nearly black in here."

"Heroin, I think." Harker paused. "Jonah, shouldn't we be reacting more violently to what's in here than we have? It's not like this is how all the apartments on this floor are decorated."

"No apartment is decorated like this," Jonah said.

"Exactly. We are being amazingly calm for two people confronted by..." Harker made vague gestures "...this."

"Maybe we're crazy," Jonah said and shrugged.

Harker considered, then let the hanger's neck go floppy again. "C'mon, let's look around," he said and stabbed the darkness with his flashlight.

The multilayered diffuse metal on the walls, floor, and ceiling formed optical tricks in the air. Illusory hallways disappeared when light scared them away; the real hallway looked like a section of wall.

"The floor plan seems generally the same as the other apartments. There's the hall to the bedrooms, we're standing in the living room, the door's behind us, so the kitchen must be to our left," Harker said and flashed light to the left. He walked to the kitchen, Jonah following.

"Did you shut the door?"

"No. I left it open an inch or so," Jonah said.

"Good. That detachment I felt earlier is fading now."

"You're not alone."

Harker walked around a black-tiled counter to examine the wall behind. Cupboards had been

here once, sinks and appliances. Now those features were blurred under inches of dark composite skin.

The fuzzy loopy endpoint of the light beam danced on a large funereal box with an ornate sculpted handle near one edge. The handle curved gracefully, more a black metal spine than anything else.

"Looks like it just got ripped out of someone's back," Jonah said morosely.

"Whole apartment's like the insides of some living thing."

"No creature I'd ever wanna meet," Harker said, giving a slight grimace. "Go pull on the spine."

Jonah looked at Harker as though he'd coughed up a live eel. "I'm not touching anything else in this place. Pull on the friggin' handle yourself."

"You touched the slime on the floor. That spine is perfectly dry. I don't see why you're complaining."

"If it's so safe, do it yourself."

"I didn't say it was safe. I said it was slimy."

"Thanks, hairsplitter. I'm not getting near anything that could've been removed from a human back."

Harker diverted himself and looked around at the ceiling and walls, their skin of black metal shingles barely reflecting what little light had forced itself inside. The flashlight continued to stare at the spinehandle. "There's no echo in here.'

"Your point?" Jonah asked.

"We're in a big tin stomach. You said so yourself. The reverb on our voices should be deafening."

"Harker?"

"Yes?"

"You're trying to figure things out again."

"Sorry. Maybe it's not metal."

"What?"

"The walls. Maybe the walls aren't metal."

"All right, all right. I'll pull the friggin' spine," Jonah groaned.

Harker uttered a confused cussword, but Jonah cut him off. "It'll make you shut up about the damn echo effect."

Jonah crept up on the disembodied vertebrae hanging on the rounded box like a handle. He shot Harker a nasty look and grabbed the spine with both hands. In a single motion, he wrenched it forward and jumped back against the counter and its lusterless skin.

Light spilled out of the box and all over the nearby floor, walls, and Jonah himself. Confused, Jonah looked at the box's innards, then his shirt.

"It's a refrigerator!" he said anticlimactically.

Harker walked over and scrutinized the fridge. Esoteric machinery hummed, tubes containing phosphorescent green fluid - the same color as the hanger's eyes - circulated their contents like malevolent green percolators. The refrigerator light was unobscured, and parts of the fridge's original inner walls were unstained by the shingles that coated its outside. What it did was as unclear as how it did it, but the apparatus in the refrigerator projected an aura of threat.

"Why are we here again?" asked Jonah.

"We're getting paid. No more reason necessary," said Harker, poking at the plates on the faucet.

"Yes, there is more reason necessary. Who's paying us?"

"A friend of a friend. He lives directly below in 201. Things keep falling through his ceiling, and he thought this tenant was responsible. He asked us if we would see what was going on. I said yes. You said yes. I believe you were there."

"Don't be a smartass. What was falling through his ceiling?"

"Rectangular black metal plates," Harker said.

"Gee, I wonder where those came from," Jonah said. He turned for the door, then stopped. "Where'd the door go?"

Harker felt his hands go cold. "You said you left it open."

"I did."

Where the door had been was now uninterrupted black shingles. The doorknob was not in the same place as it had been. It jutted out from the

wall at an odd angle. Unlike its counterpart, it had the diffuse skeletal look of the refrigerator door handle. Jonah tugged on it ineffectually.

"The plates have filled up the space," Harker stated bluntly.

"What, you mean they just grew over the gap?" Jonah's only answer was an uncertain shrug.

"I think we should get the hell out of here," Jonah said, beating and kicking where the door had been. Harker joined him without hesitation.

"This isn't working," Jonah said seconds later.

"Yep," Harker said.

"We should find another way out."

"Yep," said Harker.

They ran around the hanger and down the hall, leaping at the two bedroom doors rattling the black bony doorknobs. Jonah screamed as his door gave way and he fell backwards. The open doorway afforded a generous view of the bedroom. The window was uncovered in this room, throwing light around with careless abandon. The floor and furniture were covered in plates - bed, dresser, a small chair, a cabinet. Only vague silhouettes identified them as anything more than parts of the floor. All four walls had black plates on them, but only the wall opposite the window had the densely layered look of the rest of the apartment. The closer to the window, the fewer the tiles numbered. The window's wall was chaotic checkerboard of diffuse black and pale blue.

Several black near-rectangles slid silent and phantom-like across the walls to randomly anchor themselves on the unfinished walls and ceiling. All was silent save a faint humming.

"I wonder how they move," said Jonah wide-eyed. Harker's eyes - equally wide - followed the plates as they began to cover the window. Black metal shingles slid with increasing speed and frequency as they boarded up the portal to the outside.

"We need to get out," he said in a distant tone and dragged Jonah to the window. Both started prying at the near-rectangles, pulling them off before they adhered. Every moment the tiles kept increasing, gliding at the glass and stopping dead. Darkness was pouring into the room, drowning what little chance of escape would have remained. Always more tiles stuck than were removed. Plates stacked on top of each other, slicing with thin edges at Jonah's and Harker's fingers. Harker risked a backward glance.

"The door!" he yelled and jumped. Jonah's eyes followed as Harker dived through the forming wall of black plates. Jonah cursed and ran out after him. In the bedroom, the last slivers of sunlight died.

Harker was on the hallway floor, holding his skull to make sure his brain didn't fall out. "Where's the flashlight?" he said. Jonah saw it rolling merrily across the bedroom floor amidst goo and sliding tiles. Half a second later, the quiet metallic slap of tile on tile covered the view with black plates. Jonah cursed again.

"We can see without it," Harker said. He and Jonah ran back to the living room.

"Let's blast our way out," Jonah said. "I have a gun...."

Harker's eyes rolled as he cried," What the hell do you have a gun for?"

"I just wanted one so I got one." Jonah removed the gun from a coat pocket. The humming was growing louder.

"*Mein Gott*, it's as big as your head!" Harker said.

Jonah blinked. "Yeah? We can get out!" he said and aimed at the door.

"Don't fire...." Harker started, and the chrome pistol spat a lead hacker at where the door had been. Jonah was surprisingly accurate; sparks exploded from the doorknob, then off the refrigerator, the near wall, a black-shingled couch. Harker pulled Jonah to the floor. "I was going to say 'don't fire that in here because the bullet will ricochet.'" Sparks flared in spots; metallic pings rang out, then died.

"Oh." Jonah aimed at the door again as the humming reached deafening volume.

Tiles screeched down the hall, knocking the gun from Jonah's hand. Harker and Jonah rolled away as the shingles engulfed Jonah's shiny leadspitter. Moments later, the gun had never existed.

"The hanger's moving," Harker said, al-

most bored as diffuse plates collided with the walls in graceful aerial ballet. The hanger's fingers were twitchy and hyperactive, typing on invisible typewriters.

Jonah crawled for the door and pawed at the doorknob. "Slap slap slap," the plates said. "MMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMM"growled the apartment. Harker sat against the wall, whistling. Then he stood up and used his eyes to bore holes in the hanger. All around, the plates slapped on the walls, swirling gracefully. One slashed Harker's cheek, but he didn't react.

"Wrong apartment, sorry. We didn't mean anything by breaking in it was a stupid thing to do I know but we'd really like to go now," Harker yelled over the constant drone, the gliding tiles, and the frenzied metallic slap of tile on tile. Jonah continued trying to wrench the door free from the wall.

"Can't you hear?" Harker screamed. "We want to leave. We want to leave. We want to leave...." he chanted. Harker had seen too much; he was about to go looney.

The hanging person's head shot up and looked directly into Harker's eyes. Its crayola green eyes glowed at Harker, transfixing him with gloomlike phosphorescence. The hanger's lips moved just out of sync with the words it began to utter.

An incoherent stream of terse syllables and almost-spoken words spewed from the pale mouth, louder than the humming, gliding, and slapping. It was as if someone had turned on a faucet. The hanger's speech washed over Harker's ears - incomprehensible nonsense.

Harker went looney. "JESUS CHRIST WE DIDN'T MEAN ANYTHING BY IT WE JUST WANT TO LEAVE GET OUT EXIT...."

Jonah yanked the door open, throwing it wide. He grabbed Harker and launched them both out into the hall. The hanger kept talking, a smile adorning the pasty gaunt face, a look of hunger behind the crayola green eyes.

The door to Apartment 301 became a gaping cave mouth. Black metal tiles flew out and slapped against clean walls, a cloud of drunken rectangular bats. Other tenants left their apartments to gawk. Some were chased back inside by the shingles, their quick-shut doors then barricaded by the spreading flock. Those who didn't resist - volunteered - were enveloped, and new hangers were born.

"No money is worth this," Jonah said, tiles flying too near.

"Somehow I don't think we should worry about the money so much...." Harker said blandly as the metallic slapping of the tiles covered the rest of his words. "The tiles are free."

• •

Don't

Chun-Sum Choi

How long do I have to travel
how long do I have to endure
before
I realize I can't go on?
And will happiness be my home
where with Joy I shall stay?

Don't ask - hurting
Don't ask - suffering
Don't ask - My heart bleeding

How much do I have to think
how much do I have to learn
before
I will understand all?
And when will I say 'goodbye'
to this emotional chaos I live?

Don't ask - I cry
Don't ask - My tears
Don't ask - Don't.

Sleep Well

Mary Frances Lund

When I was teetering on womanhood,
I wore a pillbox and white gloves.
listened to Robert Goulet croon "Camelot" -
envied your Oleg Cassini gowns
and your picture-perfect family,
then wept bitter tears that cold November day
when his brains splashed out on your pink wool suit
and you became a widow
too soon.

I admired your composure -
your regal poise.

I remember thinking
in my naive youth
how cruel life was to you
as your husband and tiny son
rested eternally side by side -
never suspecting
life would be equally cruel to me.

When I became a widow
too soon
I remembered again
your composure -
your poise.
In my own search for peace and
emotional equilibrium,
you stood as a model
of grace and tranquility.

Did you ever shake your fist at God?
Did you ever bury your sobs in your pillow?
Did you ever struggle to understand
that which cannot be understood?

If you did, it never showed -
and in your leaving,
you preserved your quiet dignity.

Untitled

Maggie Clay

I want a man
to take a chance with me
ride out of this town down
the road

in my convertible ford

i've got stars in my eyes
crazy love on my mind
i want to reach the sea
and take a swim

in sweet sincere laughter

i want to select a shimmering
sunset
upon some lazy seashore
and feel

if only for a while
nestled in a warm
breeze
whispering
secrets of wisdom

My Twin

Mary Honore Coughlen

Mirror images of me and you,
your eyes are shrouded,
I can't see through,
oh what a horror,
to see my own twin,
yet feel the despair,
when I realize I can't see in.

I thought that I knew me,
but what do i know.
Looking at me,
I see nothing at all.

She Strokes...

Heather Hill

She strokes the last bit of her blush over her left cheek and leans down to make sure there are no runs in her stockings. In a few minutes, she will leave to visit him. With a last look in the mirror, she frowns, shrugs, and grabs her purse off her nightstand. She's disappointed that she can't look as well as she once did for him, but the past few years have not been kind to her. Where there had once been soft creamy skin, there are now wrinkles and crow's feet. Makeup can't hide the years that have passed since she's seen him, last.

Elizabeth slips into her room and says, "Anna? Are you ready? We only have a few hours before we're to return to the hospital."

Anna smiles and nods, excited about the day's journey. She can hardly wait to see his expression when he sees her. What if things go well? Maybe after one visit, he'll realize how much he's missed her and will agree to see her again. She resists the urge to laugh out loud and tries to keep her expectations at a minimum. Following Elizabeth down the stairs, she keeps her mouth shut. Elizabeth will only laugh if she knows what is going on inside her mind. Anna knows that Elizabeth never takes her seriously, but she doesn't mind. Then if she makes a mistake, everyone just laughs and says, "Oh, Anna!" Then she laughs too as though she is making a joke.

They climb into Elizabeth's van. Elizabeth drives which is good because Anna enjoys looking at the scenery. She likes it when it is raining because the clouds are heavy and dark, and she can see different shapes in the sky if she tries really hard and squints her eyes at the same time. Today there are no clouds in the sky, so the sun is hot on her face. She pulls the sun visor down and is content to look out the side window.

Anna closes her eyes and thinks about him. She has a memory of him in her mind. It is the time when they set up a tent in the backyard so they could fall asleep under the stars. It was a clear night, and he was telling her about each constellation. He is so intelligent about those things, she thinks to herself as she daydreams. She could never have the brains to know even a fraction of what he does. She knows that this is only one of the many reasons that she's so attracted to him. As she continues her thoughts, she begins to feel drowsy and her head lulls down to rest on the window.

Elizabeth peers over to look at her with a mixture of concern and sadness on her face. She is anxious also because she doesn't want anything to go wrong for Anna. Elizabeth loves Anna, and she doesn't like to see her get hurt. She hopes that Anna will be able to handle herself the right way.

They stop for lunch in a crowded diner. Waitresses are running around haphazardly, menus are flying, and the customers are noisy. Anna looks around with glee. She is not used to being around people, and she is excited. Little things amuse her. Elizabeth orders the chicken salad for both of them, and after their waitress leaves the table, Anna chats happily about the upcoming visit. Elizabeth keeps a pained smile on her face as Anna talks about how happy she is. About half an hour later, they are back on the road. Elizabeth can't help but continue to nervously sneak glances at her friend. She worries about the events that are sure to come.

They reach their destination at precisely two o'clock. Anna leaps excitedly out of the van. She begins running toward the open meadow. Her eyes are bright, and the wind blows around her face as she races past the great white pillars. Elizabeth tries hard to keep up to shield Anna from what is coming. Anna turns toward her with a wondering expression on her face.

"Where is he? I thought he would be here by now." She looks to her left and right, covering her eyes from the rays of the sun. Elizabeth hesitates, then slowly walks over to where Anna is standing in trepidation.

"Where is he, Elizabeth? He is coming, right?"

Elizabeth motions toward the small, white, square block of stone nestled between a rotting elm tree and a large, overgrown bush. Anna shakes her head, not understanding. Elizabeth gently takes her hand and leads her closer. Written on the stone was this inscription:

"James Anthony Lucarelli
8/7/57 - 4/15/94
loved by his dedicated wife,
Anna.

2U

Dave Putz

Skin, soft as rain,
Feeling, and healing
Seeing and being.

Movement, not quick or sudden,
But loving, gentle, and smooth.

Close and warm
Heated and heating
A hand, reaching, holding.

Lights going dim,
Sounds far away,
Moonlight through the window,
Shimmery past endurance.

A song too lovely for words,
High and clear in the night,
No longer lonely.

And a fire that burns,
But does not consume,
Lighting up dark corners,
Where no one has been for so long.

Anger

Mary Honore Coughlen

Hot like a burning forge I flew,
Screaming over wintered roads,
and by ice cracked forests,
Harvesting one by one my evil thoughts,
it splits, dividing, growing,
it cracks my demeanor,
a maniacal laugh escapes,
and my sanity peels away.

Please Please Please

Chun-Sum Choi

Please do not look in my eyes tonight,
or you will see my soul marinate in fright.
Please do not say in my dream good-bye,
or you will feel my kisses shrivel and die.

No longer will I hear those noises
of laughter, excitement, and sorrow.
Forever I will live with my choices
for yesterday, today, and tomorrow.

Please do not leave in my mind embrace,
or my blood will boil and pulses race.
Please do not lurk in my heart today,
or my sanity will be the one to pay.

Raped

Tracy Santoro

identity stolen
confidance gone
pride ripped away
body burglarized

rights forfeited
guilt instilled
permanent filth
shame pierced
nightmares the gift
forever numbness
forever numbness
forever numbness
forever numbness
forever numbness

Backyard

Chun-Sum Choi

Do you SEE what I see?
I see the Stars sing to the Wind,
and a beautiful song it is
Serenading blinks and melodious flashes

Do you HEAR what I hear?
I hear the Bee dance with the Daisies,
and a lovely dance they do.
Buzzing ChaCha and flying Jitterbug

Do you FEEL what I feel?
I feel the Clouds kiss the Moon,
and tender kisses they are.
She blushes, and tries to hide behind the
sky.

Elevation

Dave Putz

Work-weary folks wait on their floors,
The elevator comes when it's called.
Shuffle on in, close the doors,
Choose their destination.

Free to choose, free to go,
Elbow to elbow and straight staring,
To anywhere the box will take them,
Tied as it is to a cable.

All ride securely in this place,
Limited but by walls unseen,
Arriving at last at final rest.

First floor, everybody out.

Cycle of Seasons

Dojna Corzine

You're gone again lost
from my moonshadow dreams
i braid my forgetfulness
like a crown lending me power
like baring teeth and i wait
                i wait
till the sun
is your hair and the skies
are your eyes
and revolution's come round again
i crouch like a violet
under the window
counting crickets

Communication

Mary Honore Coughlen

My house is full of tears,
those shed, and those yet to be,
no, not necessarily of sorrow,
just sadness, and the tears.
Words unsaid, thoughts unspoken,
wrapped up in self-contemplation,
never-reaching, nor exceeding these things,
these boundaries that I know.

Grandpa's Gone

Chun-Sum Choi

Grandpa's gone. That's what they told me. To a ten year old boy, that meant he went to buy some candles. I'll wait for him. That's what I told them. I waited a long time.

When I got older, I came to realize what they meant, but I kept waiting. I didn't want to believe it. I knew my grandpa would come back for me. So I waited. One day, I had this urge to look at some family pictures. I opened the photo album that contains my baby pictures. I was having fun looking at the part of my life that I have no memories of. I didn't know I had a stuffed animal that ugly. I certainly didn't remember putting on a wig and mustache. Then I saw him. I saw Grandpa. He was holding a little boy in his lap at what looked like a birthday party.

He was smiling at the little boy he held in his lap. That little boy had a big smile on his face. That's Grandpa and me, I said to myself. Staring at that picture, I tried to recover that little bit of memory from my subconscious. I couldn't. Wanting to get a better look, I removed the picture from the page. When I did, I discovered some writing on the back of the picture that said "Happy Birthday! I Love You! Grandpa." I was surprised and was frozen for a while. There has to be more of this! That brought me out of my trance, and I started to take out the pictures.

There they are! They all have it! Grandpa had left little notes on the back of my pictures. I stared at them all as they spread over my desk. They're not just little notes - they are a little bit of his love. They contain a little bit of his smile. I stared and stared and stared. Then it happened. He's back. Grandpa's back. I don't have to wait anymore. He's back with me. Tears ran for the first time. Grandpa said boys don't cry, but I cried anyway. It's the only thing I knew to do at that moment, because he's back.

Today would have been Grandpa's seventieth birthday. Twelve years ago today, he was wearing that sweater I picked out for him. I knew he loved it because he said so in writing. Today, I am wearing that sweater, and he's here with me celebrating his birthday. For the second time, I cried. This time, it was the only thing I wanted to do.

Full Circle

David Weese

Weep not for me
  For I...
    The weary wayfarer
    have found sojourn
    ...in the promised land
I have found peace
  across that great river

Weep not for me
  For I...
    have been full circle
    and life is so sweet
I have glimpsed the future
...and it is bright

In my children's children's children
  I leave my legacy of hope
Look unto them...
  and see me
Through them
  I am with you...
    always and forever

Weep not for me
  For I have been full circle
    I have found peace

In loving memory of Clarence Jacob
We miss you terribly, Grandpa.

Her House

Mary Honore Coughlen

Sweet rolls and cookies,
cold milk and cotton throws,
sleepovers, and real breakfast.

All For Love

Nicole L. Bergstrom

They say when it rains on the day of a funeral, the angels are mourning the loss of the deceased. On that cold September day, it rained like never before, and the claps of thunder seemed to shake the tears from mourners in a way even the twenty-one gun salute could not. On that day I mourned the death of my father, Michael Hamlon. However, it would not be long until my grief would be swallowed by an unquenchable rage.

If I were Catholic, I would have to believe that my father is now suffering an eternity of torment in Hell for committing the unforgivable sin against God. . . taking his own life. I now believe he was cursed by God long before his death. He was damned to be hopelessly in love with a woman who neither returned his love nor gave him the respect he justly deserved. Yes. I believe my father's spirit died long before his body, and his murderer was my mother, Rose.

Though it hurts me to curse the woman who gave birth to me, I cannot deny the truth. Rose married Michael when she was very young. My father was smitten and in awe that such a beautiful girl would show interest in him. My father, Michael, was in love while my mother, Rose, wanted to escape an unyielding mother and an abusive, alcoholic father.

One would have thought that Michael was the happiest man in the world. He often smiled, and never a day would pass when he didn't have some new joke to tell. It seems he was aware of Rose's indifference and lack of affection yet must have felt that as long as she was his wife, everything was wonderful. Everything seemed fine until David came into the picture.

David Matheson, a divine minister of the law, one of Chicago's finest, most ambitious officers, stole away my mother's heart. Though Rose's heart never entirely belonged to my father, what little shred of love there might have been was destroyed by this...DAVID.

Standing all of six feet and four inches tall, David had the powerful good looks of a Viking god. His blue eyes seemed to hold within their depths fire and ice, able to burn you and chill you in one glance. Yet this man was no god but rather a demon who cast his shadow over my family and destroyed our lives.

I remember the day my mother moved out of the house. Why did she have to leave? My father knew about David. He allowed her to come and go as she pleased and never questioned her whereabouts, even when he knew she was lying. We all knew she was lying, but the day she left, reality came crashing in on us.

My mother and father had been arguing. My little brother, seven years old at the time, was sitting next to me on the sofa. We were watching television, occasionally turning up the volume to drown out the shouting that echoed through the house.

It wasn't long before the two of them came storming out of their bedroom. Rose had a suitcase in each hand. My little brother, Aaron, jumped up and started chasing after her with tears in his eyes shouting, "Where ya goin', Mom? MOM, WHERE YA GOIN'?" Each cry became more frantic until my mother, unable to avoid the question any longer, said, "Mama's going away, honey, but you can come visit me real soon." Aaron began sniffling and coughing between words. Unable to bear this display any longer, I picked him up as he were a baby, trying to comfort him, patting his back and letting him rest his head on my shoulder. When his crying calmed to short sobs, I sat him down on the sofa next to me and told him that Mom and Dad were having an argument and that it had nothing to do with us.

My mother, with tears streaming down her face, set one suitcase down and grappled for the door. My father grabbed her tightly, looked her in the eye and pleaded, "Please, Rose, don't do this...not to me, not to the kids." My mother looked at him wild-eyed and, almost screaming, said, " God damn it, Mike! I DON'T LOVE YOU ANYMORE!" At these final words, my father immediately let go of her arm and turned away, holding his face in his hands. That was the first and final time I saw my father cry.

The following Monday morning, Michael received divorce papers. He signed and processed

them through the family attorney, granting my mother her freedom without further complaints. For months after that, my father ate very little but rather preferred to drink his meals. He continued going to work in the usual manner. He'd be up and dressed before the crack of dawn. Sitting in the kitchen window sipping a cup of coffee with a cigarette in his hand, he watched the sun rise. After his second cup of coffee, he was out the door and on his way to work.

I, having been out of high school for three years at the time, worked nights at the local burger joint to do my share for the family. I'd pick Aaron up from school and keep an eye on him until my father came home from work around 4:30 p.m. When he arrived, then I'd leave for work.

On a cold Friday night, I received a call at work from a neighbor lady, Peg Smith. She said that Aaron had fallen down on his bicycle and sprained his wrist. "I tried to call your father to let him know what happened, but there was no answer." Mrs. Smith explained that she saw Aaron lying in the street crying with his bike next to him and took him to the emergency room. "We're at North Central, " she said. Mrs. Smith put the nurse on the line, and I gave her the necessary insurance information and told her I was on my way. I explained to my boss what had happened and went to the hospital to pick up Aaron.

When I finally returned home, both of the doors were locked. Aaron said that Dad had sent him outside to play saying, "Turn off that TV, son. It'll rot your brain. Go outside and play for a couple of hours and get some fresh air." There weren't too many kids in this particular neighborhood, so "go outside and play" meant, in Aaron's mind, "go ride your bike." Somewhere along the way, Aaron hit, in his words, "A BIG ROCK" with his front tire and fell down. He seemed rather proud of his new sling that the doctor, telling him how brave he was and to "....stop being such a daredevil on that bike," put on him.

As I pulled my keys out to unlock the door, my mind was racing. Why would my father send Aaron outside to play, lock all the doors, and then take off, knowing that I don't get home from work until after midnight? He'd never done a dumb-ass thing like that before. I turned the key, pushed open the door, and was welcomed by darkness. All of the lights in the house were turned off. That's my dad, I thought, always trying to save a buck. I turned on the lights and told Aaron to go take a bath and get ready for bed.

As soon as Aaron was in the tub, I hung up my coat and began checking all of the rooms to confirm my disbelief that my father could have actually left Aaron alone. After checking all the bedrooms in the house and finding them empty, the thought hit me. I decided to check the garage and see if his car was still there. I went to the door in the house that led to the garage and found it locked. Finding this strange, I went outside and opened the garage door.

The first thing I noticed was the car, the old Chevy, as plain as day. The second thing I saw caused me to nearly faint, and a wave of nausea swept over me as I saw my father lying across a chair at his work bench. The back of his head was blown off, a puddle of blood on the floor, and a .38 revolver lay only inches from where his arm dangled lifelessly. I was stunned and felt myself fading out, getting ready to faint, when a young boy's voice brought me back. Aaron was standing behind the front screen door in his pajamas, looking at me strangely.

"What's wrong?" Aaron questioned, rubbing his eyes.

"Nothing!" I yelled, forcing back tears. "Get back in the house!"

After the funeral, Rose drove Aaron and me to her and Dave's house where we were supposed to be staying from now on. When we arrived, there was David as healthy as could be with a smile on his face. I couldn't believe he was actually smiling!

"Hey, kids," he said a bit too cheerfully, "what do you want for dinner? I'll make you whatever you want."

"I'm not hungry," I said and walked away.

My mother showed Aaron and me to our room. "We only have one spare room. I hope you two don't mind sharing for a while. That's a full-size bed, but there's a rollaway in the closet, " she

said.

"It's fine, " I said with my eyes glued to the floor.

"Go ahead and unpack then," said Rose.

When she left the room, I took it upon myself to tour the house. I peeked into Rose and David's room, and there was David's gun belt laying across the bed. He'd just thrown it there like an old pair of socks. I closed the door and looked around. No one had seen me. I returned to my room where Aaron was unpacking his suitcase. I patted him on the head and sat him down.

"Aaron, do you remember talking to Grandma Hamlon at the funeral?" I asked.

Aaron nodded his head in response.

"Do you remember when she invited you to come and visit?"

Again Aaron nodded affirmatively and said, "Yeah."

"Well, how would you like to go and visit her? She loves you and needs someone to stay with her for a while. She's very lonely now that Dad's gone."

Aaron looked at me with big, sad eyes and said, "But Mom said she misses me too."

"She does, Aaron," I said, "and you'll have a lot of time to spend with Mom. But Grandma is old, and being alone now when she's so sad might make her heart sick like Daddy's."

"Okay, I'll visit Grandma," Aaron said.

"Good, " I said, "now go tell Mom what you want to do."

Aaron said "okay "and walked into the living room to talk to Rose. I heard her response to him.

"Okay, honey, but only for the weekend. Then you're coming right back home to Mommy."

As I expected, Rose asked David to drive Aaron to Grandma's house. When they left, I heard my mom rattling pans in the kitchen as she took over the dinner preparation where David had left off.

I slipped into David's room, pulled his revolver from the holster, and headed for the living room. I could see my mom from the living room, her back toward me. I tucked the gun in the front of my pants, pulled my shirt down over it, and said hello to my mother.

"Hi," she said. "Are you starting to get your appetite back?"

"Nope," I lied. "I just want to talk to you a little while."

"If it's about your father, " she said, "I'm not ready to discuss that subject just yet."

"How 'bout David?" I asked. "DO YOU FEEL maybe like you're ready to talk about him?"

"I don't want to hear any of your lip. David is a good man and has no problem taking your burger-flippin' ass into his home!" she seethed. She was about to continue her condemnation when I pulled the gun and hit her on the side of the head.

"SHUT UP!" I yelled. "It's your fault Dad's dead! Yours and that bastard Dave's!"

As Rose lay on the floor crying, I moved quickly. I went to my room and retrieved a belt from my suitcase. I returned to the kitchen where my mom lay on the floor, crying and holding her head. There was quite a bit of blood, but she would live. I'd kill her, but someone needs to take care of Aaron - and Aaron loves her. I tied the belt around her wrists and dragged her to the bedroom. I found a couple of neckties in my suitcase and tied her ankles, then ripped the bed sheets apart to tie her wrists more securely. She was a bit dazed but lay there whimpering. I kept telling her to shut up, but she kept crying and mumbling, "Oh my god, oh my god." I grabbed a pair of socks and stuffed them in her mouth to silence her, then left the room.

I shut the door and listened. The house was silent. I had to work fast. I went into the kitchen and wiped the blood off the linoleum floor, then sat at the table with the gun in hand and waited for David to come home. Those brief minutes seemed like hours, but soon I heard the door open and close. David walked in and unzipped his jacket. When he entered the kitchen and saw me, he said, "Hey kid, where's your mom?"

"She's in the bedroom," I said flatly.

David looked at me, puzzled and wide-eyed. He was about to open his mouth when I pulled out the gun and shot him twice, once in the chest and once in the head to match the wound my father took with him into the grave.

There was a lot of blood. I'd gone hunting with my father many times in the past and had helped him gut a deer more than once. I felt more remorse for those deer than the animal that now lay in front of me. I remained in my seat for a few moments watching David twitch, then got up and called the police.

Now I sit here in this prison cell, awaiting my own death. Do you understand, Father Asther, why I cannot repent? I must, as my father did, go to death without God's forgiveness but with a hope that an all-knowing God understands. Although Rose is in a mental institution, I know that my grandmother will do a sufficient job of caring for Aaron until Mom's well enough to return home. I know that what I did was justified. I just wish the jury had understood. However, I knew what I was doing and the risk I was taking. I don't mind spending eternity in the same manner as my father.

• • • •

We Are...
Heather Hill

we are like we once were
laughing kissing tickling joking loving to hurt
you look down at me you look down on me
love cannot be
bliss, it cannot be perfect as the november snow that
fell as we lay under your christmas lights and talked
about the patterns on your ceiling
why i remember that i don't know

i wake you to the divine
tuck you into the death
show you the dreams breeding in my tonic water

you isolate me yet push me into crowds
and you smirk when i squirm
i once did not want anything less than to have you
flatten my body with yours

now i'll settle for being a piece of the shattered glass
on the floor that broke when you threw your whiskey
at me

The Pick-Up Artist
Mary Honore Coughlen

Your sibilant whispers,
crossing my slender space
fall as shards of glass,
piercing my flesh,
and you,
requesting my bidding,
believe in the infallibility
of your words.
Quick as you are,
you are blind to the truth,
your lies and falsehood
gleam as opal in moonlight,
throwing sparks of deception,
feeding hatred in my soul,
it blooms and coils,
ready to strike...
but you, sensing the danger
flashing in my eyes, retreat.

Mirror Image
Rapsin

I accidently caught sight
of a stranger in the mirror.
Half-hidden by someone's head,
And another one's shoulder.
As I looked, I thought
God, how pained that person is.
And I felt sorrow and pity,
For the life that person lived.
The two people moved away.
The image in the mirror beheld.
And horribly enough I realized
The eyes of the man looking
Were staring back at me.

Smorgasbord of Life
Mary Honore Coughlen

Bright green enswirls the deadened oak,
and clamber to the top,
they shimmer and they rustle,
within the evening breeze.

I see within the woven tendrils,
to the tree beneath,
in death it gives life to life,
an anchor or a feast.

Best Intentions

Tracy Panepinto

For the first three weeks she held on to the hope that it was only a temporary condition. He had, after all, opened his eyes, talked, even eaten. And he had done it several times. During those episodes, he was his old self. Tired, maybe, but that was understandable. But the last time he awoke, it was for only a few seconds, and he had trouble making sense. He spoke of letting go and of finding peace, and she didn't like the sound of that.

The tests that Dr. Cameron ordered showed that there was brain activity. There were thoughts in that mind. But what was left of his body lay motionless, and that was what she couldn't accept - that his mind was alive and functioning but trapped in a dead body. She also couldn't accept that there was no reason for his condition. The doctors had called it some kind of a delayed stress syndrome, and that made sense with all he had been through. But it wasn't a good enough reason for her.

A nurse, smelling faintly of hospital disinfectant, breezed into the room. She monitored Frank's vitals, talking to Emma as she worked.

"Did he wake up again?"

Emma shook her head and squeezed her brother's hand. The blank whiteness of the surroundings weighed heavily on her. "I've been here all morning, and he's been like this the whole time. Not a sound - he hasn't even moved." She pretended to see something of interest on the white ceramic tile of the wall, giving herself time to work the next words around in her mind before pushing them out. "Sometimes I have to look real close just to be sure he's still breathing. I'm so afraid he'll have to be put on one of those machines." She looked at the wall again. "The ones that just keep people alive."

The nurse recited one of the well-practiced responses that was meant to cheer the countless worried relatives that she had encountered over the years. "You'd be surprised at some of the recoveries I've seen. This good-looking brother of yours might be awake for supper tonight."

Emma nodded. She knew the nurse was trying to help. She wondered how long she had worked in this ward, how many patients she had taken care of that had never woke up. If she ever thought of them again after they were shipped out to some home to wait for death to work its subtle changes. Emma wondered if the nurses could tend these patients every day and still see them as living people. Now, as she looked at Frank, she found that she needed to be reminded herself. She tightened her fists, refusing to allow herself to think that way. Dr. Cameron was willing to try "more aggressive measures" to bring Frank back. Emma had eagerly signed all the papers. As long as there was some hope, she wouldn't give up.

Emma silently watched the nurse. She listened to the gentle hum of hidden fans pushing heat throughout the building, the monotonous chime pages on the intercom system, the gentle, dulling noises of the ward. Then, when she was again alone in the room with Frank, she methodically arranged those few things that the various attendants always moved. She knew Frank's condition, but she still wanted the picture of Mama and Pa next to the bed. She wanted it there for him for the next time he woke up. And the flowers, too. A half-dozen pink roses on the tray table. Frank always liked pink roses - he said they reminded him of Mama's summertime parties when they were kids. Seeing him like this was taking a tremendous toll on her. She remembered when they were kids. Five years older than she, Frank had always seemed so strong and wise. He took care of her. Now it was her turn to take care of him. Emma pulled the tray closer to Frank, and one of the velvet petals from a rose fluttered down to rest on his arm.

The sensation was delightful - a delicate swirl of air that tickled ever so slightly as it rolled over and through him. The soft feel of color rippling out from his arm was a light counterpoint for the strong, steady sensation of Emma's hand in his. Exquisite awareness. He basked in his new-found freedom. It wasn't entirely new, though. He had first found it deep inside himself in those horrible weeks after he lost Carolyn, but then it was a floating sensation. Try as he might, he

couldn't hold on to it for more than a few seconds. But he kept trying to reach that place, that peacefulness. He knew it was a cause worth devoting a lifetime to.

Then after the accident when he lost his legs and lost Pa, it became even more important that he have that peace to turn in to. That was when he really started to control it. He learned to hold on to it for more than a second or two. Eventually it lasted for what he judged to be a full minute, but that was the extent of it for a long time.

Time. He didn't think of time in the same way anymore. How could he now that he had touched time, felt the beam of it roll against his touch , the particles pulsing their separate rhythms in his fingers. Time merely connected places - a kaleidoscope of tangible highways that tied all events into a present. Time was a conduit of indescribable beauty.

His new grasp of time also lead him to a new understanding of space and places. He could be perched on the hill high above the farm, picnic basket in hand, watching Carolyn spread the red and white checked cloth on the ground, and still be in the hospital with Emma by his side. He was a boy catching catfish on nightcrawlers with Jackie, and he was a man in a wheelchair buying textbooks for the new career he hoped to pursue. He was everything at once, and he knew this was only the beginning.

He sat on top of the hill watching the snow drift silently down on the little farm below. Around him Mama's roses bloomed. His old roan quarterhorse was in his stall, stamping impatiently on the floor, waiting to go explore the countryside. The horse, saddled and ready, beckoned him, but now he was drawn to a new direction away from the web of his life already lived, out past the luminous tendril of time.

He stretched his hand to that limitlessness, and he was there. Cautiously he proceeded, like a baby taking its first teetering steps. Then he felt himself jerked violently around. Disorientation slowed his mind.

He could feel the antiseptic smell, heavy and thick, the sterility of the tile walls echoing in his head. They wanted him back. Why were they doing it? Hadn't he reassured Emma? The freedom was slipping away, and he felt himself being pulled into a single point, locked into it and held there. He fought, knowing that it would destroy him to be caged like that now. But it was too late. He was lying in bed groggy, stiff, and aching. There was confusing activity all around. He was somewhere he didn't recognize. People he couldn't place swirled about him at a dizzying pace. Everything swirled and wavered, nauseating him. His head hurt. His heart pounded. Voices called out in excited tones, but he couldn't understand anything that was happening. He was caught in their confusing spiral, no longer in control of himself. He waited in blank, dull terror.

"He's awake!" someone said.

"He opened his eyes."

"Welcome back, Frank," said Dr. Cameron.

"It's so good just to see him with his eyes open," Emma said, barely holding back tears of joy and relief. "Frank, Frank, can you hear me?" She grasped his hand, and he reflexively squeezed her fingers. "He heard me!" she cried. "When I asked if he could hear me, he squeezed my hand!" Emma's laughing face was streaked with tears of joy. Dr. Cameron was also pleased.

"Frank," he began in a soothing voice, "I want to check a few things. You just relax. I'm going to shine a light in your eyes. I don't want to alarm you."

The nurses hovered around the bed, bubbling with the promise of recovery. They remarked on Frank's color and his ability to focus. Then without warning, without uttering a single word, he went back. His body lapsed into the deep relaxation that Emma found so disturbing.

"No...no," she mumbled in disbelief. "No, it can't happen like this. Doctor, you've got to wake him up again. You have to wake him up. It's so unfair that his life is wasted like this. You must bring him back!" She was surprised by the forcefulness in her time.

Dr. Cameron nodded in agreement.

He broke away. He was out of their grasp,

carried on an effervescence of clam to a clear stillness. Darkness lit by colored sound. Speed softened by horizonless vistas. He floated beyond time. Carolyn and Emma, Mama and Pa; they were all a part of him here. And not just people. The farm, the trees on the farm, and trees he had never seen. And mountains he had never seen, and waters too. And air never imagined. He basked in infinity.

Sometimes he would still feel their tug, but he refused to go back to the hospital. The journey kept offering him new choices, different experiences branching off in all directions, and he could follow them all simultaneously.

Then something new. He did not immediately recognize the danger of it. A slow backward slide, like being sucked down through a funnel. Then he knew.

"I'm sorry, Emma. I'm afraid this is the best we can do." It was Dr. Cameron's voice. His sympathy was genuine.

Frank was lying in bed in the hospital. His eyes were open, occasionally rolling back into his head. Sometimes his right hand would jerk as though reaching for something that wasn't there. His head was propped between pillows to keep it from twisting to one side or the other. Sometimes he coughed.

"His brain function has deteriorated from what it was when he was in the coma. It's likely that it's caused by the drugs that we're using to keep him here."

Dr. Cameron explained to Emma what the hospital technology had explained to him. Frank was semi-conscious. He wasn't going to get any better than that. The new medication was the only thing that kept him from going back into the coma. A side effect of the medicine was the stifling of the brain activity that had so disturbed Emma before - when she knew Frank was alive inside but couldn't really live.

"Those are the only choices?" She questioned the doctor. "A working mind trapped in a body that won't respond, or half-awake but not thinking? Not aware of how hopeless things are?"

"It's hard to say for sure exactly how all these test results translate literally. We're just not advanced enough in this area to know for certain. I'm sorry I can't give you more to go on."

"So now the choice is mine," Emma said thoughtfully. She knew she had to do what was best for Frank. She studied the tile walls. She watched Frank clench and unclench his hand. She rearranged the roses on the vase. Finally, she turned back to the doctor. "I think it would be kinder if he couldn't think about what he can't have."

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Strength

David Weese

Strength
Strength to stand together
    to stand alone to,
    know the right road
    and take it in time

Loneliness is a monster
The fear of being alone deceives us
  We fool ourselves...
   Forgetting who we are
We let ourselves be...
  swayed and mistreated
   Trodden down -
            till our spirits are crushed
Soon it seems we know no other way

Shattered lives?
  Strength can rebuild them
But broken spirits?

Dinner

Heather Hill

As I sit down at the table tonight for another eventful evening dinner with Mom, Dad, and Sis, I am reminded of the fact that plasticness is not restricted to just the confines of the "high school scene." I look at my mother who greets me with a beautifully forced smile. Even though inside I know she feels like committing suicide, she proudly walks toward the table with beef barbecue bake in one hand, salt and pepper shakers in the other. All her life she has been the perfect little Catholic girl, only doing things the Lord would approve of like screaming at her daughters, threatening them with knives when her husband isn't around, and baking brownies for the neighbors.

Speaking of her husband, my father, he pats me on the back without saying a word and resumes eating. Yes, he's just the perfect daddy...when he's home. I can probably count on one hand the number of days that he's home in a month. Believe me, he's more than business on his mind when he takes those trips to Dixon all the time. Besides getting drunk, he's also doing more than flirting with his secretary who always seems to accompany him. My father and I never talk. What I say is not important to him. Money and power are what is important to him, and I have neither of those.

Back to reality. Mother smiles daintily and asks me if I'd like more meat. I scarcely shake my head and glare at them. Sometimes I feel like screaming out an apology to the two of them. "Sorry I'm not living in your little dream world! The world where no one seems to know what you're doing behind their backs. Sorry that I woke up to reality. I really want to apologize for not being the perfect child." But then I think to myself, they already own the perfect child. All of the things I lack (and yes, that's a lot) are made up for by my shining sister. My straight-A, dancing, singing, student counciling sister. (Take time out from your reading to applaud...please?) As my sister politely asks for the pepper to be passed, my mother and father look over at her with a feeling of...relief? Maybe relief that they have one image to shield their perfect world from life as we know it called reality. I suddenly feel sick and don't bother excusing myself from the table. "Have you had enough, honey?" Definitely.

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Branch on Overflow

Dave Putz

Computers hatched awkward as Model T's,
Through generations measured by the week,
To desks of rastered screen and clicking keys,
Now weaving up their world-wide web to speak.

In veins of wire the blood of business hot,
Fact racing past on microscopic path
And yet, incapable of any thought,
Imaginations dictated by math.

Their grail the lure of ease and leisure time,
Yet still their users toil from eight to five.
The bits of help produced by Dell and Prime
Serve but to raise the goals upward toward which we strive.

What future do these tools of data hold?
Lives might be glorious, free for dream and thought,
Or might it be as we, and they, grow old,
That we will serve electric minds we wrought.

(Note: Branch on Overflow is a computer instruction directing the action to be taken when an internal storage register is too small to hold the result of a calculation. Dell and Prime are two computer manufacturers.)

Gay in the USA

Michael Kessler

It's a little scary but really exciting when I ponder the fact that I'm pretty much an openly gay person. Certainly this essay is contributing to that end. Twelve years ago I could scarcely fathom telling a single soul about my sexuality without getting nervous as hell. I wondered how I could ever live an entire life hiding such a horrible secret without going mad. Today, thanks in part to a well of determination inside me and in large part to the almost unanimous support I've received from friends and relatives who have found out over the years, I've come to a point of near full acceptance.

The fact that I admit being openly gay is somewhat scary for me betrays the fact that I'm not quite there yet. I still have to summon courage before I tell someone I'm gay. The fact remains that the United States, along with many other countries, is a place where rather extreme models of masculinity and femininity are firmly embedded in our minds from the earliest age. If you're a boy, you are to stay on the masculine side of the fence, and vice versa for girls. Although my own circumstances were by no means as grim as those of many of my gay brothers and sisters, as I child I could not escape the damage this polarization does to so many children. As an adult, I still find myself waging a battle against it. Too often we are made to suffer for our uniqueness, and the victims among us are not only gays but blacks, Jews, women, fat people, blue collar workers, rich people - you name it. None of us can avoid our common human tendency to categorize and compare. Our intelligence allows us to do this; our folly allows us to abuse each other with it.

Until recently I never considered myself to be an advocate of anything, and I've never had much of a taste for politics, but a number of recent events in my own life have served to make me realize that I can no longer be a silent bystander while time and time again I observe others talking about gays and lesbians in ways that clearly tell me they have no idea what they are talking about. I want the people in my life to know I am gay because I want them to observe for themselves that gay is only a part of who I am, who we are, and there's nothing wrong with it. Being gay doesn't make us perverts. Being gay does not mean we have some built-in demonic tendency to recruit other people into being gay. It does not mean we should be precluded from ordination as priests and ministers or that we are not valuable members of the U.S. military. It does not mean we don't deserve to be recognized as a family when we live together or that we don't make good parents. It does not warrant discrimination against us in matters of housing, employment, education, and insurance. It does not mean we deserve to die of AIDS. And it most certainly does not mean we're unworthy of God's love. What being gay does mean is that we love and make love a little differently than straight people do. That's where our difference begins and that's where it ends.

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Forget

Mary Honore Coughlen

painful memories burn acidic,
hydrochloric etchings,
running rivulets,
coursing through,
only to return...
always

Full of Mad Hope

Bill Yarrow

full of mad hope
we dash into the street
leap into the fray,
and enter splendiferous lists.

full of mad hope
we move from the west
fill our heads with information
and break open the impossible text.

full of mad hope
we fashion a mask
fling up the shade
and rename the earth.

full of mad hope
we ascend Swiss mountains
search for African caches for gems
and dance in fields of high lightning.

full of mad hope
we put ourselves in history
we teach what we love to marry what we grieve
and see what old artifacts mean.

full of mad hope
we pull ourselves up to the light
visit death houses in search of memory
and see in the future our previous face.

full of mad hope
we invent evil
ratify virtue
then run on and go on and live on.

En Passant

Ted Thompson

Image grows beyond itself,
Becomes a pawn
In the larger game.
A queen of nouns
Conquers a knightly
Verb.
A gambit of metaphor.
Endgame.

Necropolis

Judy Bond

All Caeser's legions
trampled on our dust
building the roads over us so that we, too, might
know the way to Rome.

We did not follow their sandaled feet
to the Forum
but stayed to dance
on a flat fresco
of burnt red and dark-sun pigments
in a cool, silent tomb.

The Road

Mary Honore Coughlen

I watch these creatures in their flitting
lifestyles,
traveling all in the same direction,
no organization,
a madness to their method.
The only thing that awaits
their unthinking journey...
death.

I Remember a Desperate Hunger

John Stobart

Swiss steak in savory sauce
Flooding mashed potatoes
Plunges through the labrynth of
Memories my mind labels
Sacred. It was after Sunday School, in 1941.
My sister was wearing a wine-colored
Velveteen dress with a doily-like collar
And she had Shirley Temple banana curls
But wouldn't hurry home with
Me to get that food. Instead
She made me wait famished
As she finished a game of
Chinese Checkers with a boy whose
Mother laundered our curtains
And stretched them on frames all
Over her house. And we were
So late that we were punished
By not getting any dinner.
And that was November and like a dream
And my daddy was killed in December
In an auto wreck
And Mommy never fixed Swiss steak
Anymore 'cause it was Daddy's
Favorite, and I've had it fixed
By many people since then
But somehow I still hunger
For that lost meal.

The Sun Rises

Nancy Lockhart

The sun rises up out of winter
illuminating some ancient giant's tears
run down in rivulets upon the window.
Her breath paints patterns of wisdom
On the wall.

If Dogs Should Come

Bill Yarrow

If dogs should come
Do not run
Do not turn
    fall down
Keep even pace
Face front
Don't stop
Be deaf to danger
Outrage
Anger
Make secrets of your steps
Don't run
Make silence with yourself
No screams
Decelerate your breathing
Reprove the heart
For beating fast
Admonish silly gasps
It is in the air
Cold at your eyes
Night by your arms
Fear in your veins
Keep pace
Face front
The pinching blackness
Will not rend you
The tearing barking
Cannot maim you
The awful silence
Will not eat you
Your sacred body
Cannot die.

Wendigo

Mike Oliveri

The elderly man raised a gnarled hand into the air as his bushy eyebrows arched sharply toward his nose. "An icy gale howled down from the heavens, hurling snow and ice into the unprotected faces of the villagers. Without warning, the Wendigo emerged from the swirling masses of flakes and tore through the village, destroying homes and slaughtering the people! Then, as suddenly as he had arrived, he disappeared back into the storm. As the last flakes fell to the ground, one boy sat huddled against the remains of his home, eyes staring blindly at the broken bodies of his parents in the street before him."

"Wow," the little boy whispered in awe. "Did that really happen?"

The old man sat back in his chair and placed his pipe in his mouth. He regarded the boy carefully for a moment, then nodded gravely. "Yes, it did."

At that moment, a slender woman appeared in the open doorway and leaned against the doorjamb. She blew a stray lock of her black hair out of her face and smiled at the old man. "You're still telling that hokey story to children?"

The man stood, tucked the young boy in, and said goodnight. He then pushed past the woman muttering, "It's not a hokey story."

The woman waved goodnight to her young son and pulled the door shut behind her. She followed her father into the kitchen where he sat at the table. "Father, I don't mind you telling stories to my son, but please don't tell him to believe them. His imagination tends to run wild as it is."

Frustrated, the man pulled his pipe from his lips and began to shout. "How many times do I have to tell you? My village was destroyed by the Wendigo when I was a child! When I returned, the only survivor was my young brother!" He then fell to coughing.

"The catatonic boy in the story."

Still coughing, the man nodded. When he had regained his composure, he set about emptying and repacking his pipe. "When I found my brother that night, he was near totally frozen and thin as a rail. He had just enough time to describe the great monster that ripped through the village before he died in my arms."

"Father, it was just a freak storm, probably a whirlwind, that destroyed your family's home."

"Damn it! Then how do you explain what my brother saw? Tell me that!"

The woman bowed her head. She hated to upset her father but felt it would be better than allowing him to believe in the supernatural. "Father, please. The horror of the situation probably made him see things that weren't really there."

He silently puffed on his pipe.

"I'm going to bed. Put a few more logs on the fire before you turn in." She turned away and retired to her bedroom.

The old man sat in silence, then emptied his pipe and placed it in his pocket. He walked over to the hook inside the door and pulled on his heavy parka. Then, careful not to make any noise, he opened the front door and stepped into the snow-covered streets.

He trudged through the ankle-deep snow at a casual pace. The light of the full moon glittered off the white surface, casting an eerie silver glow upon the other homes of the village.

He paused when he heard the sound of drunken voices singing somewhere ahead. He considered his course for a moment, then shrugged and trudged onward. Before long, three men stumbled out of the shadows, two of them holding bottles of some unknown liquor.

One of the drunkards caught sight if the old man, then pointed and whispered to his comrades. Another of them shouted "Hey, old man! Seen any spooks lately?" The others broke out into laughter, one falling to his knees and clutching his stomach. "Better watch out! The kids down the road built a snowman! If you're not careful, it'll getcha!"

The old man ignored them and continued. Their taunts assaulted him until he turned a corner and was finally gone from their sight.

A fiery anger burned in the old man's heart. Nobody was willing to believe the Wendigo

had murdered his family. They didn't see the blood in the streets. They didn't see the shattered homes and broken bodies. They didn't talk to his brother, dead at the age of ten. And they didn't spend countless years of their lives traveling the world in search of an explanation for the occurrences that night.

Yes, he knew that the Wendigo was out there, somewhere, waiting to be summoned. Not even his own daughter, whom he returned home to care for eight years ago when her mother died, believed him. She thought him just a crazy old man, hysterical after a lifetime of lonely wandering.

But he knew a way to change all that. He knew a way to make them believe. And tonight was the night - the winter solstice when the night was the longest, and the moon shone full upon the earth. Tonight was the last time anyone would have a laugh at his expense.

He hobbled up the slope of a large hill overlooking the village. He stared down in silence at the peaceful homes, at the pale smoke rising from the chimneys, and at the flickering firelight in some of the windows.

His eyes traveled from home to home, pausing briefly at each as he recalled the faces of the inhabitants, twisted into hideous masks of bitter ridicule. Echoes of their raucous laughter rang in his ears, adding to the pain and strengthening his anger.

With grim resolve, he spat and turned away from the village. He stepped over to a nearby tree, broke off a small branch, then moved to a fresh patch of now, unmarred by the tracks of humans or animals. Using the branch as a makeshift stylus, the old man sketched out a rough circle in the snow. Within the circle, he carefully drew a series of graceful arcs, tight corners, and sharp angles. The end result was strangely symmetrical with a diamond at the very center. No line had a visible beginning or end, but they all seemed to converge on the diamond. Satisfied, he cast away the branch, drew a small knife from his coat, and sat down against a tree.

He sat very still and quiet, his only motion to shift his grip on the knife to prevent it from freezing to his palm. Before long, a small brown rabbit appeared beneath a bush. Its whiskers twitched as it stared silently out into the clearing. The old man stiffened and held his breath.

Satisfied that all was safe, the rabbit hopped out into the clearing. He made a small zigzag path through the snow, stopping occasionally to sniff at a fallen branch or small stones. Before long, the rabbit was only a few paces away from the old man's feet. With one graceful movement, he reversed his grip on the knife and threw it. It spun end over end, glittering in the moonlight, then came to rest in the rabbit's side. The rabbit flopped about for a few minutes, then finally lay still.

The old man picked up the carcass and withdrew his knife. He then slashed the rabbit's throat and dripped its blood upon the design before placing the remains within the diamond. Finally he tossed his blade aside and knelt before the circle, facing the village.

Slowly and carefully, he traced out intricate designs within the air before him and uttered low, guttural words and phrases of an almost inhuman origin.

Soon a dim fog began to appear about him. He increased the rate and pitch of his speaking, tracing out larger designs before him. Large clouds appeared overhead, blotting out the moonlight. The fog about him became denser, reducing the village to a mass of blurry squares. He rose to his feet, shouting his ominous chants over the now-howling winds. Snow began to fall, swirling about him like a cold white sheet. His blood grew cold as icewater within his veins as his shouting mounted into a crescendo of eerie howls and wails. Suddenly, he felt tremors beneath his feet, intermittent but strong. They steadily grew stronger, and a low howl joined his ranting.

The man fell to his knees, laughing hysterically as the Wendigo thundered past him and down the slope toward the unsuspecting village. He watched the hulking white shape, twice as large as any bear, shamble down into the swirling snow and fog, head raised to the sky as it howled its fury. Great horns curled back from above its eyes, and heavy talons were visible at its fingertips.

tips.

He could hear loud snapping sounds as the Wendigo burst through homes, breaking through the wooden walls like they were sheets of paper. Occasionally, the screams of the villagers could be heard above the howling storm and would make their way up the hill where the old man could hear them and rejoice in their pain. "You're not laughing now, are you!" he screamed into the storm.

For half an hour the storm persisted, and the sounds of destruction raged on. The old man laughed and danced maniacally all the while, his sanity also swept away by the cold winds.

Eventually the storm faded, and the moon once again emerged from its veil of clouds, bathing the ruined village in silver light. The old man walked down the hill, surveying the result of his malign summoning. He grinned as he walked past collapsed homes and spat as he stepped over mauled bodies.

Finally he came to a halt before the remains of his old home. He stared for a moment, then giggled. His giggle became a laugh, then finally a mad cackle.

He heard a soft sound. He identified it as a soft whisper, coming from somewhere beneath the collapsed logs. Moving closer, he soon found its source. He shifted a few logs and removed his grandson from the rubble.

Except for a few scratches and bruises, the boy was physically unharmed. He stared out into nothingness, unblinking and unfocused, muttering incoherently.

The old man held the boy to his chest. "It's okay, " he consoled. "I'll take care of you, little brother."

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Snow

Mary Honore Coughlen

glisten, crystal-shot
dog-run rabbit running scared
child feet stomping cold

The Sounds of Light

Bill Yarrow

The cemetery moon half lights
these dead, the stones, the pond, the paths,
the half-bouquets and silent weeps
one master shadow over all.
The graveyard wind among the webs weaves
and gusts and rushes the clouds. Crickets
lift their wings. The dust raises its head
In a stroke everything is set in motion.

The rain falls with fury on the dust,
falls indifferent from the moon.
Wet fingers move through hollow soil.
The rotting people of the earth.
The velvet stench of death relents.
The sounds of light begin to swell.

My Garden

Mary Honore Coughlen

I fall to lie silent
among the moss shrouded ground, absorbing
verdant juices,
joy, peace I have found.

A Shadow Darker Than Midnight

Scott Super

I stared out the narrow window carved into the dark castle walls at the setting sun with a kind of nervous anticipation. I watched the sun die in a brilliant display of dazzling color. The sky itself seemed to bleed as the last weakening rays of the sinking sun painted the horizon red, then a fading purple, and finally black. It was always like this. The waiting for the sun to set and darkness to claim the land, for the last rays of light to leave the earth--so the shadow may hunt.

For that is what I am. A Shadow. There are only twelve of us in the entire world. All assassins whose skill is legendary and rivaled by none. Each can do things other mortals cannot even begin to imagine, and our power in the darkness is unfathomable. Among a group of the most deadly assassins in the world, I am the only one who has not taken a life, the only one who has no name. I watch now the last sunset I will see as an innocent. The last sunset without an identity.

Becoming a Shadow is perhaps one of the hardest things I've ever done. It has taken me fifteen years to reach this night, enduring a regimen of training that would have killed most men. I have reached the highest rank that One Without A Name can hold, and now it is time to take my final test. The one thing I had never considered was my own soul. My conscience. Even now I hear it screaming somewhere within the dark chambers of my mind, shrieking against the task I must complete this night. I look down at my slender, pale hands and I realize they're trembling. Are these the hands of a killer?

I don't know.

I've played out what I am to do this night a thousand times, seeing it over and over, searching for some justification where I know there is none. The slow, patient stalking of a victim, the long moment of silence before I reach down to pull the gleaming dagger from its sheath, and the flash of light on metal as I flick my wrist outward in one quick snap - sending the deadly weapon hurling end over end through the air, stopping only once as it sinks to the hilt in the base of my victim's neck.

So easy. I could do it in my sleep. For perhaps the hundredth time, I pull that dagger out of its hidden sheath, hefting it in my hands, sensing its perfection. It is a balance as precise as the blade is sharp, and its keen edge will never grow dull, never lose its deadly point no matter how many throats I cut or hearts I reft.

It will never regret ending a single one of those lives. It will never close its eyes at night and see the horror-stricken faces of those it kills so efficiently....

Almost unconsciously, my hand begins the complex, flickering movements of one of the drills I learned at the Guild. I allow the trancelike concentration it requires to lead my thoughts away from the impending night. Soon the dagger is whizzing and flickering through the air so fast I can barely follow its movements. I have to rely solely on the reflexes guiding the weapon to follow through with the intricate pattern it sliced through the air. For several minutes I drifted, caught up in the erratic lightning rhythm of the dancing blade. Suddenly, there was a noise - very faint and to my left - that finally snapped me out of my reverie. Whirling, I spun just in time to see an arrow whiz out of the shadows and streak toward my heart. There was another flash of movement as my hand shot up and caught the arrow shaft in mid-flight, stopping the thing just inches from my heart.

"You're too slow, Nameless. I could have put three more behind that one before you even turned around." The voice was low and mocking, seeming to come from everywhere and nowhere at once.

"You shouldn't be here, Wraith. If Midnight knew, he'd have you flayed."

"But he doesn't know, and I don't think he's interested just now anyway."

I smiled. Wraith shouldn't have responded to my barb. I was surprised when he had first entered but not now. My sensitive ears have used the sound of his voice to pinpoint his location. Feigning a shrug, I use the gesture to hide the subtle motion in my wrist which reversed the dagger in my hand and readied it for a throw.

"What's that supposed to mean?" I asked, still smiling.

"Oh, - " he began unconcernedly.

Then I launched my dagger at the pool of shadow slightly behind and to the right of me. I was rewarded with a surprise grunt as the assassin raised his brow to block the unexpected attack, deflecting the weapon from its intended target - his right eye - but not reacting quite fast enough to avoid being nicked sharply in the ear. With a muffled curse, the shadow stumbled out of his concealment holding the side of his head tightly, glaring indignantly at me from across the room.

"Now who's slow, eh, Wraith?" I laughed.

He shifted uncomfortably for a second - perhaps trying to decide whether or not he should try to kill me or if he could, for that matter - then looked up, offering a weak smile.

"You're getting better. The boy I knew three years ago would never have been able to do that." I shrugged.

"I'm not a boy anymore, Wraith."

The older assassin looked sharply at me again, his level gaze boring into my own unflinching stare for a moment. He grunted again, looking ruefully at the bloodied hand he'd been pressing to his ear. "Aye, maybe you're right at that."

There was an uncomfortable silence in the room as the two of us stood in silence, our thoughts drifting inward. Assassins are a solitary type, not much given to socializing, even amongst our own kind. Finally, the silence was broken by a loud blaring horn that emanated from outside, in the court below.

Instantly a large lead weight dropped into the middle of my stomach. It was time. Time to kill. Time to die. Wraith was already gone, dissolving into the shadows with a lithe grace that belied his age. Alone, the dagger I retrieved was no longer a comfort. Its deadly weight felt cold and alien in my hands, and I suddenly felt a deep and utter loathing for the thing.

I don't remember how long I stood in that small shadowy room at the top of the tower, looking down at the weapon in my hand as if it were a live snake. It must have been some time for I actually jumped in surprise when the horn blasted the night air a second time, abrupt and with an almost impatient ring.

Thrusting my troubled thoughts away, I sheathed my blade and strode towards the door, deliberately turning my back on the room and hopefully any doubts that I held about my task tonight. I was a fool. How can a man escape his own conscience?

While descending the stairs to the bottom of the tower, I concentrated on removing any trace of emotion from my face and bearing, forcing myself into an expressionless statue. The Guild of Shadows is an elite group of the world's finest killers, and they brook no flaws in any of their number. To betray one's thoughts or emotions is considered a serious offense -- one that would mean instant death if detected.

The courtyard itself was not very large - small, by most castle standards. Only a few torches had been lit to ward off the darkness of the newly fallen night. Within the deep pools of shadow that seemed to be everywhere, I could see the faintest of subtle movements, betraying the positions of the assassins hiding here. Only one, other than myself, was completely visible in the small circle of light - a tall man, clad in tight fitting black clothes with only his head exposed. Bright, blue eyes that seem to take in everything at once bored into mine with an intensity that was almost frightening. His fine, delicate features were woven into an expressionless mask and framed by ebony hair that fell down between his shoulder blades, seeming darker than the night itself.

The arch-assassin Midnight.

Heeding an unspoken command, I stopped and stood before the man, careful not to lower my eyes or even so much as blink as he assessed my demeanor. A long, tense moment of silence followed, and at once I thrilled inwardly, half-hoping the Shadow would deem me unworthy and kill me on the spot, making it unnecessary to complete the night's events.

"You are worthy of us, young assassin. Now prove yourself and earn your name."

With that, there was a flash of movement all around me, and I knew without looking that the assassins were gone. I was alone. Relief washed over me and with a small sigh, I dropped the rigid facade I had so carefully maintained in the Shadow's presence. The empty courtyard seemed eerie suddenly. The black walls looming over me looked almost like grim, motionless sentinels witnessing my terrible weakness.

An assassin who could not kill.

Wait until the moon reaches its zenith, then enter the castle and complete your final task. Midnight's dry, icy voice hissed inside my mind. I clenched my teeth angrily, not missing the subtle note of triumph in his words at defeating my mental barriers.

I know the rules, Midnight, I retorted, but he was already gone.

A glance at the star-filled sky told me I had some time to wait and at first, I busied myself checking my various weapons, ensuring their readiness - a black longbow slung across my back, two slender sabers at my hips, and finally the dagger gripped tightly within my pale fist. The long moments of silence grew heavy, and eventually my mind turned to the hundreds of doubts that have been plaguing me for months. *Will I be able to kill when the time comes? What if I can't? What if I fail?* There are no answers, of course. I was alone with only a troubled conscience for a companion.

The Guild has been my life ever since I can remember. They raised me from an orphaned child and began training me when I was old enough. I've been taught since childhood the way of the assassin, and never before have I questioned our beliefs. The true test of the Shadow's skill - a blade into the heart of a target undetected - always seemed so far away, almost unreal. Now that I face that test, I find that all that I've been brought up to believe is a lie.

To kill another is wrong, but I cannot ignore the debt I owe to the Guild. They saved me from being killed by the thieves that murdered my parents and watched over me as I grew. How can I renounce my only family? To fail this now would be the same as turning my back on all that I know. I am an assassin. A killer. There is nothing else. If I follow my shrieking conscience, I deny my own self. I deny what I am.

I don't know how long I sat upon the cold stone of the courtyard steps, struggling with my inner self for what seemed to be a problem with no answer. But when I finally emerged from my thoughts, the moon was high overhead, glaring down from the black, cloudless sky like a single milky-white eye.

I took a moment to gather myself, once again drawing my thoughts inward, my face becoming the flat, emotionless mask of the assassin.

It is time.

With dagger in hand, I sprinted across the courtyard, my footfalls silent and steady as I drew toward the looming shape of the tower. The great double doors were barred from the inside, providing me with my first obstacle: entry. I had no grappling hook nor any rope with which I could have scaled the wall. Grimly, I studied the space between each of the stones, carefully weighing my options. I could scale the wall with my hands, but the other assassins - whose duty it is to try and stop me from completing my task - would surely see me. I might encircle the base of the thing, hoping to find another unlocked entrance, but this

tower had been designed by assassins who were forever obsessed with security. There would be no other way in.

Sighing, I resigned myself to a hard, arduous climb. The first window was quite a bit higher than it looked from the ground, a fact that I became painfully aware of during my climb. To further complicate matters, it was too narrow for me to squeeze through. Cursing under my breath, I clutched the crevices in the stone even more tightly than before until my knuckles turned white - almost glowing in the darkness. I would have to climb higher. Trying not to think about just how impressive my altitude was already, I pulled myself closer to the wall, willing my body to meld with the shadows enveloping it. My movements were painfully slow. At times I seemed to be not moving at all, but I couldn't afford to be seen by the eyes that were no doubt scouring the wall even now. My position was too vulnerable. If even one noticed me, I would receive an arrow in the back for my efforts.

I suddenly hoped Wraith wasn't one of the Shadows who were looking for me. The older assassin does not appreciate being shown up by anyone, and the spiteful assassin may decide to shoot me in the leg instead, not wanting me to miss the pleasure of shrieking down two hundred feet to my death.

After what seemed an eternity, I finally reached a window large enough for me to slide in, carefully bracing my fall to avoid making any noise. I heard the distinct sound of three arrows biting into the stones behind me. I smiled. So it had been Wraith. You're too late, old man, I projected smugly with my mind voice. There came back a mental growl, low and fierce, and I had to bite back a sudden urge to laugh.

Crouched in a shadow by the sill of the window, I murmured a few arcane words, invoking the power of Darksight. Instantly the darkness melted away as if the sun had risen, and the entire room came sharply into focus. I was alone here, and dimly I realized I was in the same room I had been in before. A chair stood unused in the corner with perhaps a decade worth of settled dust adorning its smooth wooden surface. A blood-red carpet, also old and worn with the passage of time, partially covered the stone floor. There was nothing else in the room except a small painting on the far wall which was so old and decayed it was impossible to discern the picture it presented.

I stalked across the room carefully, making not a whisper as I crossed the floor to the door on the other side. It was ajar, and I tentatively swung it open a fraction of an inch - just enough for me to slide through. The hall was a little larger than I remembered with a high ceiling and doors to both sides. I knew both of these may hold the other Shadows, waiting for me to drift by so they may slip a dagger in my back. Squinting slightly, I crouched down to study the floor for any signs of recent use. For several moments I could find nothing, and I was just about to give up when the slightest of tracks to the left caught my attention. I could have made them when I left the room to face Midnight, and I quickly compared the size of my foot to those in the dust on the floor.

They matched. Damn.

Without the tracks, I had no way of knowing where the other assassins hid, and with a grim intake of breath resolved myself for what lay ahead. Although doubts still raged in my mind, the warrior instincts that have been instilled in my mind since childhood pushed them aside, concentrating on survival. If any of the others managed to surprise me, it would be my last mistake.

The silence of the seemingly empty corridor was almost tangible, pressing down on me until my very breath came only with difficulty. My dagger, clenched firmly in hand once more, led the way with its deadly blade positioned low. The first half of the narrow hall was empty, yielding nothing save a large rat that squeaked at me for disturbing its rest. As I moved on, keenly aware that the rodent's irritation must be audible for miles, I sidestepped smoothly into another small chamber which must have been a closet at one time. The reek of moldy cloaks and other unpleasant scents was so strong I had to fight back a desperate urge to gag. My efforts did not go unrewarded, however. A moment before I took cover, three black shapes floated past, gliding down the hall as if they were as insubstantial as their namesake.

A chill swept over me as they passed, and I clenched my teeth and shuddered as the assassins' aura enveloped me. Death. Never have I felt such a powerful presence, and I knew instantly that these must be some of the highest ranking assassins. Midnight himself was not among them, for he would not have fallen for such a simple ploy....

I realized my mistake at the same time that the sword, glowing with arcane power, blasted the door that shielded me into splinters. There were four, not three of them, and they came at me with blades up, faster than striking vipers. There was a blur of movement and the Shadows stumbled back, one missing his dagger and a few fingers as well.

I knew I could not possibly win against so many and, with one desperate lunge, darted past the injured Shadow. I came in low and dropped into a roll the moment I hit the floor, narrowly avoiding the arrows that whizzed only inches above. They were faster than I thought, and I could hear - or rather feel - them drawing closer before I even completed the roll that saved my life.

Arrows whizzed past my head like angry wasps, and I knew if I stopped moving, I was dead. I came up from the roll at a dead run. There was a door to my right, and I prayed to whatever gods may be listening as I threw my shoulder against it.

It was old, and the force of my impact was more than sufficient to not only open the door but carry me across most of the room as well. I didn't waste any time slamming the door behind me and was relieved when I heard several more arrows thud harmlessly into the wood on the other side.

The Shadows had failed in their attempt to kill me,

and it was considered very bad form to pursue a failed mark. The assassins would leave, and as I leaned against the door, I knew I was safe.

It occurred to me that I might not have come so close to getting killed just then if I had taken the opportunity presented me when I was hiding in the closet. I could have killed them all. And I knew it.

Then why didn't I?

I shook my head. No answers. There never were.

The reason for my being here, the shadow I'm supposed to kill, could be anywhere in the Tower as could the remaining seven. The other five, including Wraith, would leave, having failed, which meant there were no more on this level. This left me with an interesting position. I knew the others had to be somewhere below, ignorant of my location. A desperate hope welled up in me as I realized I might be able to escape the Tower through the way I had come. Cowardly, I thought, but I could see no other way. How am I supposed to thrust this dagger into someone and look unflinchingly into his face as the light slowly leaves his eyes? No one ever told me how to forget the look of betrayal that would surely haunt my dreams for the rest of my life.

If you leave, you turn your back on who you are. Why deny what you have accepted for so long? Why question this now?

Thoughts of cowardice are one thing, but to betray the Guild was much different. No matter what they believe or whatever the consequences, I must not fail them.

I cannot say why I felt such loyalty to them. Perhaps it is because I owe them my life, but I think it is more than that. They represent a purpose in the short and painful life I have led. I cannot give that up so easily. Still torn, I decided that I could not leave this Tower without facing this decision, so I resigned myself to whatever transpires in the next hour before dawn.

Whatever I choose, part of me must die this night....

I explored the rest of the upper levels of the Tower carefully but encountered no one until I reached the lowest floor. I should have known something was wrong instantly, but I wasn't concentrating on my surroundings anymore.

I didn't see him until he was nearly on top of me and by then, it was too late.

Midnight leapt off one of the highest rafters hanging from the ceiling and landed with the predatory grace of a panther. Effortlessly, he grabbed me by the front of the shirt and hoisted me in the air. My first instinct was to put my dagger in his eye, and with horror I realized my blade was already streaking toward him. At the last possible second, I halted the thing - just inches from his iris. This, of course, was what he had been waiting for - confirmation of what he suspected all along.

His eyes, like chips of blue ice, glared at me with undisguised loathing and fury. DO IT! His mind roared at me, KILL ME! I struggled, trying in vain to free myself from his vice-like grip. Coldly, he gave a snarl of disgust and hurled me to the floor. I hit the stones hard, and my left shoulder exploded in horrible agony.

Heartless coward, he sneered.

I bowed my head in defeat, waiting for the Shadow to advance and finish the job. Midnight came forward, roughly picked me up, and threw me against the wall. *No. Too easy. You're going to make the choice. I will not make it for you.* Uncomprehending, I looked at him with a confused, startled expression. He let me go, allowing me to slump against the stone wall, and gestured to the center of the room. Instantly a light shone down and illuminated the center of the room. A man in his late forties sat in a chair, bound to it by his hands and ankles. His face was a horrible mask of savage hatred and fear.

Midnight turned to me and whispered with a dreadful intensity, "Kill this man, and I will forget all that has past. You can overcome this weakness of yours and be one of us. You can still have your name."

It was a shocking offer. I had fully expected to die for my failure to kill, and now I was being offered a second chance. How could I pass this up? Perhaps I am meant to be a killer.

Reluctantly, I retrieved my dagger from where it had fallen when Midnight had thrown me and grimly advanced on the man in the chair. He was straining to free himself now, desperately jerking his limbs. For a split second, our eyes met, and I saw the depthless fear in them - the unwillingness to die.

My hands trembled, and I almost dropped the blade in my hand. I can't do this, I thought.

Yes, you can, Midnight hissed. *This man is a criminal. A thief and a murderer of children. You can do the world a service by dispatching this wretch. Kill him. Kill him now!*

I looked once more at the man, and I saw the hatred, the terrible, life-hating evil in him. I pictured him brutally beating a small child to death, and a wave of anger washed over me. I narrowed my eyes and raised the dagger then, preparing to plunge the thing to the hilt into this man's chest. Then: *Yes! Now, do it now! Become one of us!* I could sense the exalting glee in Midnight's mind voice, a peculiar satisfaction that I did not like.

With effort I checked the welling anger threatening to overwhelm me and looked back at the arch-assassin. My suspicion and hesitancy enraged him, and for the first time I saw emotion register on his pale, dead face.

"HE WAS THE ONE WHO KILLED YOUR PARENTS, FOOL!" Midnight roared, his booming voice echoing throughout the cavernous chamber.

That was it. The rage broke the floodgates in my mind and consumed me, pushing me past the point of reason. Without thinking, I screamed and thrust the dagger into the man's chest with such force that he was blasted

backward and upward, chair and all.

He landed with a sickening crunch, gasping and gurgling. Blood poured from his mouth and nose, forming a scarlet pool that almost looked black in the darkness. I stood there staring, gaping as the man gave one final shudder and died.

Yes! Midnight's voice hissed. *Yes! You are....*

That was as far as he got. A new anger had replaced the old one. I had just thrown away all that I believed in. I had just become the killer I had never wanted to be - and this man had made it happen. He had deliberately manipulated my emotions in order to plunge me into the same godless, damned existence as he. The rage that consumed me then is beyond understanding.

It is not possible to describe the battle that followed. Our movements came faster than thoughts, faster than the mortal eye could follow. My dagger was still buried in the corpse on the floor, so I drew my sabers and met Midnight's own longsword and dagger with a furious roar, forcing the arch-assassin backward. The surprised Shadow quickly recovered, launching his own attacks, spinning and twirling his blades with infinite grace and deadly accuracy.

At first, I was giving the arch-assassin ground, concentrating solely on keeping his lightning-fast thrusts away. But the horrible rage within me had crested and, with a burst of adrenaline, had exploded into a furious array of twirling attacks and thrusts. The Shadow's blades met mine, and we exchanged countless blows, neither able to find a weakness in the other's defenses. Our battle took on a life of its own as our flashing, flickering weapons gathered a momentum neither of us could control. Midnight spun and I dodged, sidestepping smoothly and launching an attack of my own. His blades countered, then hammered my blades with his.

It went on forever. The two shadows flew like wraiths in the darkness, our blades dancing endlessly, furiously slicing the air with inhuman speed. We were the most evenly matched swordsmen alive, and hours fell to the ringing sounds of our struggle.

The end came abruptly. It could happen no other way. Midnight's last thrust came in just a fraction of an inch too low, only a fraction of a second too late. My sabers struck faster than vipers.

Still, I must live with the knowledge that I had the chance to redeem myself and did not. The killer that I had in turn killed, the wretched man who had murdered my parents - his death I could have learned to live with in time. Midnight had manipulated my emotions to the point where I had no control over them, and my actions were not entirely my own.

But how can I justify killing Midnight? It was no accident. I drove the points of my saber into his heart with more deliberate cruelty than I had ever thought myself capable of. My reasons were clear. Revenge. Revenge for the man I had killed, for my parents who had died so long ago, but most of all for myself. For all the ideals and beliefs that I had clung to so desperately for my entire life. For the principles that kept me dangling in the frayed edge of sanity for twenty winters. Perhaps I killed the right man, an evil, cruel creature who deserved to die - for the wrong reason.

I knew I would have to live with that knowledge for the rest of my life. This realization, I believe, finally killed all that remained human in my soul.

Midnight groaned once, I think, as his limp body slid off the gleaming steel of my swords, then collapsed into a motionless heap, dead.

A bitter, chilling darkness descended over me then. The blood in my veins grew cold, and my heart died. The scarlet glow in my eyes as I strode from the chamber warned all who approached that a new arch-assassin had risen, vicious and cruel, finally lost to the few remaining vestiges of redemption.

From the top of Nightspire, the Tower of All Shadows, I received my name from the bitter fate destiny had dealt me. So it was the Shadow was born. A Shadow darker than Midnight....

• • • •

Wish You Were Here

John Stobart

On a TV talk show
A deformed but pretty young woman
recites an opening monologue:
"I'm happy to be here
To tell you how unhappy I am
To be alive.
"I wish my parents hadn't been so strong.
So self-sacrificing, such saints
Because I struggle so hard for so little
And they give so much
That it hurts me when they do help me.
So I want to die with pain and shame.
"And I get so angry at this government
Because it kept me alive on machines
When I could have died mindlessly
And makes me live without dignity
While making paupers of my parents
And my brother and two sisters.
"And I'm so sick of doctors
Who lie to me with smile-faces
And puncture me with needles everywhere
And chemicals and experiment
On me with procedures and gadgets.
But most of all I hate the god
Who created my horror show
And the sanctimonious people
Who invoke a god's name
To keep people like me alive
To feel the pain
While these same people do nothing
To support my parents or me
In our mortal hell
And indeed hate me now hearing how I feel
About them."

And an elderly lady on the panel,
Representing the right to life,
Responds.

"First, I must acknowledge that I ache for
The agony this child demonstrates so beautifully
And for the millions like her though they lack
Her gift to articulate
Or her brain to analyze.
"However, to me, it is obvious that whoever
kept her alive
At whatever cost
Should be applauded, not attacked.
"She exemplifies, for me, the human condition
At perhaps its noblest extreme, the martyr.
She's like Christ, except that she's not yet learned
'Forgive them. They know not what they do.'
She is young. She will learn."

• •

On Waking

Judy Bond

Bright morning sunlight
filters through the crack
where the curtains meet,
a fat ribbon of light
full of dancing duet,
creating a slanted, transparent wall
in front of the plastered one
where shadows hang
like ancient wallpaper.

Brilliant light and vague ghosts
hold hands this day,
this morning,
as sleep wakes from dreams
and cannot tell
yesterday from tomorrow.

A memory slips in
and slides out
like an envelope under the door:
a message from the past
I cannot read -
a privileged moment,
I suspect,
without embroidery or invention,
without joy.

WORDEATER 88 STUDENT JURY

Nicole Bergstrom
Jeff Cernz
Nicole Ferguson
Linda Frank
Mary Frances Lund
Jeremy Pauz
Teri Thompson

John Stobart, Academic Advisor
Mary Frances Lund, Editor
Scott Olsen, Technical Advisor

For a selection to be printed in this issue, four of the above students had to vote for acceptance. For the award winners, only John Stobart is responsible.

AWARDS

WRITERS $5.00 each

Nicole Bergstrom
Mary Honere Coughlen
Zach Donaldson
Connie Ellerman
Heather Hill
Michael Kessler
Tracy Panepinto
Jeremy Pauz
Dave Putz
Scott Super

COVERS (front and back) $20.00

Michael Fletcher

Note: Awards were difficult for this issue due to an unusual number of fine prose selections. Only writers who had never received awards and who submitted several selections were winners.

SUBMISSION DEADLINES

Manuscripts and cover designs must be submitted to:
John Stobart, room C1069,
by
Feb. 15, 1995 - Wordeater 91
April 19, 1995 - Wordeater 92

Manuscripts should be typed and will not be returned.

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This issue contains selections from students, faculty, and friends of Joliet Junior College. Only current students, however, are eligible for awards.

DRACULA
BY BRAM STOKER
ADVENTURES OF SHERLOCK HOLMES
BY SIR ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE
AROUND THE WORLD IN 80 DAYS
BY JULES VERNE